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Howe, Samuel Gridley.

SENATE....No. 38.

MESSAGE.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, February 20, 1850.

To the Senate :

I herewith communicate, for the use of the Legislature, the Report of Dr. S. G. Howe, on "Training and Teaching Idiots," under the Resolves of May 8, 1848.

GEO. N. BRIGGS.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PERKINS INSTITUTION, AND MASS. ASYLUM }
FOR THE BLIND, Boston, Feb., 1850. }

To His Excellency, GEORGE N. BRIGGS, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:—

SIR,—I have the honor to lay before you a

R E P O R T

of what has been done, during the past year, towards carrying out the benevolent intentions of the Legislature of Massachusetts, as set forth in the Resolves, approved May 8, 1848, entitled "Resolves concerning Training and Teaching Idiots," with such remarks as the subject naturally suggests.

It may be well, in this first report, to put upon record, a brief history of this interesting movement in behalf of a class of unfortunate creatures, who have hitherto been thought to be beyond the reach even of the most earnest hand of charity.

In the winter of 1845-6, several gentlemen became interested in the sad condition of the idiots in the State, and, without any precise knowledge of what had been done for such persons elsewhere, or what could be done, determined that a fair trial should be made of the capacity of this unhappy class for improvement. The State had most readily and generously seconded the efforts of humane men for the relief of the insane, the deaf-mutes, and the blind; and made ample provision for their care and instruction. While, like a wise parent, she left all her other children to wholesome liberty, and strengthening self control, she gathered these feeble ones under the wings of her motherly love, and nursed and nurtured them with unsparing pains and care. Nothing had been done for the most wretched and helpless of all,—the idiots, but this was only because their case seemed hopeless. Their bodies were fed and clad. As for minds, they

seemed to have none. They were therefore kept out of sight of the public, as beings, the presence of whom, seemed only to do harm to the beholders. It was thought desirable to ignore their very existence, as much as possible; and little was known of their number and condition. If it had been certain, that nothing could be done to improve them, this course would have been, in some respects, wise; for the sight of any human being in a state of brutishness, is demoralizing to unreflecting beholders.

The first thing to be done, in the plan for their improvement, was to gather together the necessary knowledge concerning their number and condition, in a form that could be depended upon; and the Legislature was persuaded to pass a Resolve, on the 11th day of April, 1846, appointing commissioners, "to inquire into the condition of the Idiots of the Commonwealth,—to ascertain their number, and whether anything can be done in their behalf."

The commissioners,* so appointed, made a report, "in part," to the governor, in the winter of 1847; but, not having finished their labors, they asked to be continued, and their request was granted.

They made a final and full report in the winter of 1847-8; which, with its statistical tables, and minute details, was published, by order of the Legislature.†

A few short extracts, from this report, of painfully interesting facts, will show what was the number and condition of the wretched creatures, who had been the subjects of examination.

The commissioners begin by saying:—"We did not look upon idiocy as a thing which concerned only the hundred or thousand unfortunate creatures, in this generation, who are stunted or blighted by it; for even if means could be found, of raising all the idiots, now within our borders, from their brutishness, and alleviating their suffering, the work would have to be done over again, because the next generation would be burdened with an equal number of them. Such means would only cut off the outward cancer, and leave the vicious sources of it in the system. We regarded idiocy as a diseased excrescence of society; as an outward sign of an inward malady. It

* The commissioners were S. G. Howe, Horatio Byington, and Gilman Kimball.

† Report to the Governor, Feb. 26, 1848, by S. G. Howe, Chairman of the Commission.

was hard to believe it to be in the order of Providence, that the earth should always be cumbered with so many creatures in the human shape, but without the light of human reason. It seemed impious, to attribute to the Creator any such glaring imperfection in his handiwork. It appeared to us certain, that the existence of so many idiots, in every generation, *must* be the consequence of some violation of the *natural laws*; that, where there was so much suffering, there must have been sin. We resolved, therefore, to seek for the *sources* of the evil, as well as to gauge the depth and extent of the misery. It was to be expected, that the search would oblige us to witness painful scenes, not only of misfortunes and sufferings, but of deformities and infirmities, the consequences of ignorance, vice, and depravity. The subjects of them, however, were brethren of the human family; the end proposed, was not only to relieve their sufferings, and improve their condition, but, if possible, to lessen such evils in coming generations; the task, therefore, was not to be shrunk from, however repulsive and painful was its contemplation."

"It must be confessed, however, that we have been painfully disappointed by the sad reality, for the numbers of beings originally made in God's image, but now sunk in utter brutishness, is fearfully great, even beyond any thing that had been anticipated."

"The examination of their physical condition forces one into scenes, from the contemplation of which, the mind and the senses instinctively revolt."

"In searching for the causes of this wretchedness in the condition and habits of the progenitors of the sufferers, there is found a degree of physical deterioration, and of mental and moral darkness, which will hardly be credited."

"We would fain be spared any relation of what has been witnessed, as well for our own sake, as for the tastes and feelings of others, which must be shocked by the recital of it. It would be pleasanter simply to recommend such measures as would tend to remove the present evils, and prevent their recurrence; but this may not be."

"Evils, however, cannot be grappled with and overcome, unless their nature and extent are fully known. Besides, our duty

was not only to examine into, but to report upon, the *condition* of the idiots in our Commonwealth; and that duty must be done."

With regard to the number, the report says:—

"By diligent and careful inquiries, in nearly one hundred towns in different parts of the State, we have ascertained the existence, and examined the condition, of *five hundred and seventy-five* human beings who are condemned to hopeless idiocy, who are considered and treated as idiots by their neighbors, and left to their own brutishness. They are also idiotic in a legal sense; that is, they are regarded as incapable of entering into contracts, and are irresponsible for their actions, although some of them would not be considered as idiots according to the definition of idiocy by medical writers."

"There are a few cases where insanity has terminated in total *dementia*. There are others, where the sufferers seemed to have had all their faculties in youth, and to have gradually lost them, not by insanity, but by unknown causes. Excluding such cases, there are four hundred and twenty persons who are to be regarded as truly idiots. These are found in 77 towns. But of these towns only 63 were thoroughly examined. They contain an aggregate population of 185,942; among which, were found 361 idiots, exclusive of insane persons. Now, if the other parts of the State contain the same proportion of idiots to their whole population, the total number in the Commonwealth is between *fourteen and fifteen hundred!*"

After given the reasons for supposing this calculation not too high, the report continues,—

"Over four hundred idiots have been minutely inspected by us personally, or by an agent upon whom we can rely. Upon the bodily and mental condition of these, will be based our remarks and conclusions. In an Appendix will be found their names, ages, physical condition, and mental and moral character. It may seem to some, who inspect the Tables, that they contain many trivial details with regard to the physical condition of the persons named, but it is hard to be too minute in these statements. The whole subject of idiocy is new. Science has not yet thrown her certain light upon its remote, or even its proximate causes."

"There is little doubt, however, that they are to be found in the **CONDITION OF THE BODILY ORGANIZATION**. The size and shape

of the head, therefore; the proportionate development of its different parts; the condition of the nervous system; the temperament; the activity of the various functions; the development of the great cavities; the chest and abdomen; the stature; the weight;—every peculiarity, in short, that can be noted in a great number of individuals, may be valuable to future observers. We contribute our own observations to the store of facts, out of which science may, by and by, deduce general laws. If any bodily peculiarities, however minute, *always* accompany peculiar mental conditions, they become important; they are the finger-marks of the Creator, by which we learn to read his works.”

“There are yet more subtle causes of idiocy existing in the bodily organization, and derived from the action of that mysterious, but inevitable law, by which nature, outraged in the persons of the parents, exacts her penalty from the persons of their children. We have endeavored to throw some light upon this also; or rather, to give a number of detached luminous points; trusting that more accurate observers will furnish many others, until all the dark surface shall be made bright, and the whole subject become clear.”

Speaking of the condition of idiots, the report says,—

“One of the greatest difficulties in the consideration of this subject, is to distinguish between demented persons and idiots. In our lunatic asylums are found some, who are reduced to a state of complete idiocy, but who are not, strictly speaking, idiots; their minds have once been in the normal condition; they have lost their understanding; they are *demented*. It is not necessary, however, in a report like this, intended merely to promote a work of humanity, to be very precise about the definition of terms. It was probably the intention of the legislature to use the word “idiot” in the popular and common sense.”

“We have considered, therefore, all persons whose understanding is undeveloped, or developed only in a partial and very feeble degree, or who have lost their understanding, without becoming insane, to be proper objects for examination. Of the 575 persons reported to us as idiotic, 420 may be considered as properly idiotic, for their feebleness of intellect is connate; while 155 have become idiotic after birth.”

THE CONDITION AND CAPACITIES OF THE IDIOTS IN MASSACHUSETTS.

“Confining our attention to the cases of real idiots, above-mentioned, viz.:—420 out of 575,—it is found that 187 are under 25 years of age. Of these, 174 seem capable of improvement; they present proper cases for attempts at instruction, and the formation of regular, industrious, and cleanly habits. Only 13 seem incapable of improvement. Of those over 25 years of age, there are 73 who seem capable of little or no improvement in mental condition.”

“Of the 420 idiots proper, 19 can now earn their board and clothing, under the management of discreet persons; 141 do earn their board, when properly managed; 110 can do trifling work, if carefully watched and directed; 73 are as helpless as children of 7 years old; 43 are as helpless as children of 2 years old; and 33 are as utterly helpless as infants.”

“With regard to pecuniary circumstances, of the 420 who were particularly examined, 20 have property of their own, held by guardians; 26 belong to wealthy families; 196 belong to indigent families, but are not public paupers, though some of them receive occasional aid from the public; 148 are town or state paupers. Of the whole number,—namely 574,—there are 220 at town or state charge.”

“Of the 420 idiots proper, 218 are insatiable gluttons; and 102 are known to be given to self abuse in a frightful degree. For further information, we refer to the cases in the Appendix, and to the Tables, and proceed to consider the actual

CONDITION AND TREATMENT OF IDIOTS.

“In order to form a just idea upon this subject, we purposely made our examination of idiots in nearly one hundred towns, situated in various parts of the Commonwealth, from the seashore to the western line. Of the whole number examined, 220 were town or state paupers, and mostly kept in the alms-houses. These will be first spoken of.”

“They are of all sorts and grades of idiocy, from the mere simpleton, who has speech and some intelligence, though not quite enough to take entire care of himself, or his own affairs,

down to the speechless and driveling idiot, who has no thought, no affection, and no care about any thing. They are of all ages, from the child, who is entering upon his dark and cheerless pilgrimage of life, without more thought of his relations with man, or his duty to God, than a young animal, up to the old man, who is closing his career without a knowledge of the joys and sorrows of the world which he leaves behind him, and without a thought about his lot in that before him."

"Some being comparatively free from the dominion of animal lust and appetite, are mild, affectionate, and docile, while others are a helpless prey to dreadful passions, depraved appetites, and disgusting propensities. Some are evidently susceptible of great improvement; they desire instruction, and might, with care, be saved from the terrible fate before them; while others are so cruelly blasted in the very bud, are so utterly destitute of human capacities,—are such complete abortions,—that little can be done except to render their animal existence as decent and comfortable as possible."

"But greatly as the bodily and mental condition of these poor creatures varies, and whatever may be their capacity for improvement, their treatment and their fate are, for the most part, the same. They need more careful treatment, more judicious associates, and more skilful training, than any other persons; for, even with all these advantages, their chance for development of their human faculties, and their restoration to human society, is small; what then can it be, when, deprived of them, and thrust into the almshouses, they are left without any special care and instruction, to associate with ignorant paupers and broken down drunkards?"

TREATMENT OF IDIOTS IN THE ALMSHOUSES.

"With very few exceptions, they are kindly treated in the almshouses. There is reason to believe that a great change has been made for the better, in this respect, within a few years. The interest that has been manifested in lunatics, and the substitution of kindness and moral influence, for the hard treatment and blows, which were formerly so common, have been of benefit to idiots also. Thus we see that good is contagious as well as evil; and kindness and love, extended to one class of

men, is sure to benefit others. In many places, it was found, that the partial report made by your commissioners, the last year, had been received and read by keepers of almshouses; and that they had changed their views with regard to the best mode of treating idiocy, in consequence of the statements there put forth. It is gratifying to be able to state, that no instance of cruel or wilfully unkind treatment of idiots, by the keepers of any almshouses were met with. In most cases, the overseers of the poor have given orders for the idiots to be treated with kindness. In a few instances, men of strong, natural sense and of humanity, reflecting that idiots of the lowest grade do not differ materially in intelligence from the higher animals, have ceased to blame or punish them, for waywardness or misbehavior, any more than they would punish animals for the like causes, and they have substituted kindness of treatment and constant employment for the old modes of punishment and confinement. But though there is little or no *intentional* cruelty or unkindness practised towards idiots in our almshouses, there is, in many cases, a most deplorable ignorance of their true condition and wants, which leads to serious consequences."

Many a child who was only simple, and whom kind and wise parents might have trained up to intelligent manhood, on becoming an orphan, has been thrown into the almshouse, and there neglected and mismanaged, until the feeble light of reason has gone out, and left him in the darkness and hopelessness of idiocy. A great many half-witted persons, when first sent to the almshouses, have vicious and debasing habits, which might be cured, but which are generally neglected and allowed to grow rampant, until all moral sense and all decency are gone, and the poor victims become driveling idiots. In some almshouses, from want of sufficient force of character on the part of the keepers, or from want of sufficient help to enforce the discipline, the unfortunate idiots are the butts of the rest of the inmates. In some such cases, they are not only grossly mismanaged, but terribly abused by the pauper inmates.

Sometimes, for want of proper buildings, the separation of the sexes cannot be strictly maintained, and, of course, the whole moral atmosphere of the house is tainted.

What hope can there be, in such cases, for the poor youth who is partially idiotic; what prospect is there for him, but

that of gradually sinking down to the level of the brutes? Is such the manner in which the public should discharge the sacred responsibility which devolves upon it, when it assumes the place and the duties of parent and guardian to the orphan and destitute?

The report goes on to a consideration of the various ways in which the condition of idiots is made worse by the injudicious treatment they receive in the almshouses; under the head of cleanliness, it is said:—

“Some keepers of almshouses seem to think that a man need be washed only twice in this world,—once by the nurse before she puts on his swaddling-clothes, and once again before she puts on his grave-clothes. They are confirmed, perhaps, in this, by the flippant wise-acres, who, wrapped complacently in a year’s coating of scurf, say that a man must be a dirty fellow who needs bathing every day.”

“If the almshouse is far removed from any pond or river, in which the inmates bathe for pleasure during the hot weather, the only ablutions required of them are performed by dipping the hands daily in cold water, and rubbing them over the face; and on Sunday, perhaps, by working down with a little soap, to the white skin about the neck and ears.”

“Now cleanliness is of especial importance to idiots. Like other persons, they need it as one of the minor virtues of morality; as a virtue which is essential to decent self-respect, and as a means of preserving and restoring health. Moreover, they, in an especial manner, require the frequent shock of cold water upon the surface of the body, as a direct aid to other attempts which should be constantly made for increasing their command over the action of the voluntary muscles. The want of power over the nerves and muscles is often one of the most striking features of idiocy. It is sometimes so great that idiots cannot hold themselves erect. The restoration or the increase of this power should always be kept in view in their hygienic treatment. The total neglect of all these considerations, and the filthy condition of body in which these orphans are kept by the public, who is their guardian, is one of the many indications of the necessity of a change in their condition.”

Another is found in gross errors which are so common with respect to the

ALIMENTATION, OR FEEDING OF IDIOTS.

Every one who is at all conversant with physiology, knows the importance of adapting the diet to the nature and condition of the bodily organization. What is good for one man may be very bad for another. A quantity which one man can consume with benefit to himself, during a year spent in the open air and in constant exercise, may, if consumed in a year of sedentary and idle life, be laying the foundations of fatal disease.

The man whose brain and nervous system are in a high state of activity, should use animal food very differently from the man whose brain is sluggish, and whose muscular system is largely developed. Now, the farther a man's system is from the normal standard of health, the more caution is required in regard to his diet. An error or an excess, which a healthy man hardly feels, affects a feeble one severely.

Idiots are almost always in an abnormal condition of health. Their diet may be such as to amend this condition,—to increase the tone and vigor of the nervous centres,—or it may be such as to produce exactly the opposite effect, and to aggravate all their troubles.

Unfortunately, the considerations named above, are seldom, if ever, regarded in our almshouses, and the idiots are fed just as the other paupers are.

“A weak, nervous, and idle idiot, to whom gross animal food is like poison, is fed upon fat pork, whenever pork is cooked for the hearty laborers who have been working out in the fields. Moreover, idiots are apt to have morbid appetites, which lead them to devour any thing that they can lay hands upon. Instead of treating these morbid appetites as diseases, the keepers sometimes punish the idiots, with about as much reason as they would beat a man who had the jaundice, for seeing things yellow. More often, however, no thought is bestowed about their diet, and the unfortunate creatures sometimes fill their stomachs with the most injurious substances.”

But the greatest injury arises from gross ignorance of those principles of physiology which should be observed, with regard to the *quantity* of food consumed by idiots. The animal propensities are very active in these half developed beings. They are exceedingly prone to gluttony, and if allowed to eat as

much as they choose, they will so gorge themselves, that the whole nervous energy will be expended in digesting, and none be left to stimulate the brain to activity.

“By reference to the Tables in the Appendix, it will be seen that, out of 444 idiots, who were examined upon this point, 280 were ravenous in their appetites, and gluttonous in their habits.”

“Representing the average consumption of food by adults by ten, it is found that, among these idiots, the consumption must be represented by $14\frac{1}{2}$.”

“Our idiots, then, are overfed ; they are generally allowed to eat as much as they choose at the table, and then, in many cases, they prowl about, and pick up what they can, cheating even the pigs by stealing the apple-parings, crusts, and the like, from the swill-pail.”

Under the head of EXERCISE the report says :—

“Another striking defect in the treatment of idiots, is the neglect of regular and severe exercise. It is beginning to be seen, in a few almshouses, that if a man is kept hard at work all day, he is not only less mischievous, but he lies down tired at night, and sleeps soundly till morning. Some of the keepers of the houses having the ability to address the proper motives to their half-witted inmates, contrive to keep them constantly employed, and the effect is soon seen in their improved bodily and mental condition. But, as in common schools, some masters of superior ability and tact can preserve order and promote diligent study, by appeals to high motives, while others can only do so by blows upon the soul and blows upon the body ; so some masters of almshouses are followed round to any work, and fawned upon, by idiots, as dogs fawn upon a beloved master, while others can extort from them only a scanty task, by scolding and by stripes.”

“It is beginning to be so well understood, that beating, and punishment of any kind, inflicted upon idiots with the view to making them work, is bad policy, that the Overseers of the Poor, in most towns, have forbidden the keepers of almshouses to resort to them. Some have done so, doubtless, from feelings of humanity, but others from considerations of economy ; for they say, the time and pains necessary to be expended by keepers and overseers, *are not paid for* by the reluctant labor performed by the idiots. The consequence is, that the poor creatures are

left in the house, or yard, while the keepers and the able-bodied men are away, at work upon the "poor's farm." Of course, the idiots are called upon by the women to do small chores, which they perform in a slipshod manner; or they are made game of by the lazy lubbers, who are found in every poor-house; or they bask in the sun, and indulge in unseemly habits."

"As for instruction, there is not a single almshouse within our knowledge, we believe there is not one in the State, or country, in which any systematic attempts are made to develop the feeble mental and moral faculties of idiots; in a word, there is no school for those who, more than all others, need one."

"On the whole, then, after excepting five or six almshouses, in which the idiots are treated both kindly and wisely, the general condition of those at the public charge is most deplorable. They are filthy, gluttonous, lazy, and given up to abominations of various kinds. They not only do not improve, but they sink deeper and deeper,—while under the public care,—into bodily depravity and mental degradation. It is true that this is the result of ignorance, rather than of any unkindness; but the plea of ignorance can no longer save us from the sin and disgrace."

The report then proceeds to notice the Condition of Idiots in Private Families, and says:—

"Bad, however, as is the condition of the idiots who are at public charge, and gross as is the ignorance of those who take the charge of them, about their real wants and capacities, we are constrained to say, that the condition of those in private houses is, generally speaking, still worse, and the ignorance of the relatives and friends who support them, is still more profound."

"This is not to be wondered at, when we consider that idiots are generally born of a very poor stock,—of parents who are subject to some disorders of the brain, or who are themselves scrofulous and puny, to the last degree. Such persons are, generally, very feeble in intellect, poor in purse, and intemperate in habits. A great many of them are hardly able to take care of themselves. They are unfit to teach or train common children; how much less idiots, whose education is the most difficult of all! On the other hand, the masters of almshouses, and their wives, are, generally, intelligent and responsible persons;

and, though they are, of course, ignorant of the art of training idiots, they will not permit such gross errors as are common among the parents of idiotic children."

"We have ascertained (mainly by personal observation) the condition of 355 idiotic persons, who are not town or state paupers. Of these, there may be, at the most, five who are treated very judiciously, are taught by wise and discreet persons, and whose faculties and capacities are developed to their fullest extent."

"The rest are, generally, in a most deplorable condition, as it respects their bodily, mental, and moral treatment. One would hardly be credited, if he should put down half the instances of gross ignorance manifested by parents, in this enlightened community, in the treatment of idiotic children. Sometimes they find that the children seem to comprehend what they hear, but soon forget it; hence they conclude that the brain is soft, and cannot retain impressions, and then they cover the head with cold poultices of oak-bark, in order to tan, or harden the fibres. Others, finding that it is exceedingly difficult to make any impression upon the mind, conclude that the brain is too hard, and they torture the poor child with hot and *softening* poultices of bread and milk; or they plaster tar over the whole skull, and keep it on for a long time."

"These are innocent applications compared with some, which, doubtless, render weak-minded children perfectly idiotic. In the Appendix will be found ten cases, where children were supposed to have had their minds enfeebled by excessive use of strong medicines, especially calomel. This is sometimes given with the view of *mending* the condition of the brain, and sometimes with the view of healing scrofulous ulcers. They say, that mercury administered plentifully within, will act as a solder, and '*solder up the openings.*'"

"Worse still, are the numerous cases where the parents encourage the ravenous gluttony of their children, by all sorts of stimulants to the appetite. They say, "the poor creatures have few things which they can enjoy in this world,—that food is one of these, and that they shall have as much as they can eat of it."

In some families which are degraded by drunkenness and vice, there is a degree of combined ignorance and depravity which disgraces humanity. It is not wonderful that feeble-

minded children are born in such families; or, being born, that many of them become idiotic. Out of this class, domestics are sometimes taken by those in better circumstances, and they make their employers feel the consequences of suffering ignorance and vice to exist in the community.

“Nothing can afford a stronger argument in favor of an institution for the proper training and teaching of idiots, and the dissemination of information upon the subject, than the striking difference manifested in the condition of the few children who are properly cared for, and judiciously treated, and those who are neglected or abused. There are cases in our community, of youths who are idiotic from birth, but who, under proper care and training, have become cleanly in person, quiet in deportment, industrious in habits, and who would almost pass in society for persons of common intelligence, and yet, their natural capacity was no greater than that of others, who, from ignorance, or neglect of their parents, have become filthy, gluttonous, lazy, vicious, depraved, and are rapidly sinking into driveling idiocy. This fact alone should be enough to encourage the State to take measures, at once, for the establishment of a school or institution for teaching and training idiots, if it were but a matter of experiment.”

Some of the causes of idiocy are set forth in the report, of which we shall quote but two; the first is the LOW CONDITION OF THE PHYSICAL ORGANIZATION of one or both parents; induced often by INTEMPERANCE; the second is, THE INTERMARRIAGE OF RELATIVES

“It is said by physiologists, that among certain classes of miserably paid and poorly fed workmen, the physical system degenerates so rapidly, that the children are feeble and puny, and but few live to maturity; that the grand-children are still more puny; until, in the third or fourth generation, the individuals are no longer able to perpetuate their species, and the ranks must be filled up by fresh subjects from other walks of life, to run, perhaps, the same round of deterioration. It would seem, that startled nature, having given warning, by the degenerated condition of three or four generations, at last refuses to continue a race so monstrous upon the earth. We see here another of those checks and balances which the exhaustless wisdom of God preëstablished in the very nature of man, to

prevent his utter degeneration. As the comet, rushing headlong towards the sun, is, by the very velocity which it gains, and which seems hurling it into the burning mass, carried safely beyond,—so a race of men, abusing the power of procreation, may rush on to the path of deterioration, until, arrived at a certain point, a new principle develops itself, the procreating power is exhausted, and that part of the human family must perish, or regain its power by admixture with a less degenerate race.”

“It will be seen by the Tables that by far the greater part of idiots are children of parents, one or both of whom were of scrofulous temperament, and poor, flabby organization. It is difficult to describe exactly the marks which characterize this low organization, but the eye of a physiologist detects it at once.”

Regarding it as a matter relating to the mere animal man, if a farmer had swine, cattle, or horses, as inferior to others of their kind, as many of these people are inferior to other men and women, he would pronounce them unfit to breed from; such persons are indeed unfit to continue the species, for while they multiply its number, they lessen its aggregate power.”

The report states, that out of 420 cases of congenital idiocy, which was examined, some information was obtained respecting the condition of the progenitors of 359. Now, in all these 359 cases, save only four, it is found that one or the other, or both, of the immediate progenitors of the unfortunate sufferer had, in some way, widely departed from the normal condition of health, and violated the natural laws. That is to say, one or the other, or both of them, had been very unhealthy or scrofulous; or hereditarily predisposed to affections of the brain, causing occasional insanity; or had intermarried with blood relatives; or had been intemperate; or had been guilty of sensual excesses which impair the constitution.

This subject of the hereditary transmission of diseased tendency is of vast importance, but it is a difficult one to treat, because a squeamish delicacy makes people avoid it; but if ever the race is to be relieved of a tithe of the bodily ills which flesh is now heir to, it must be by a clear understanding of, and a willing obedience to the law which makes the parents the blessing or the curse of the children; the givers of strength

and vigor, and beauty, or the dispensers of debility, and disease, and deformity. It is by the lever of enlightened parental love, more than by any other power, that mankind is to be raised to the highest attainable point of bodily perfection.

Seeking for the cause of the low condition of the bodily organization, the report shows that a fertile one may be found in

INTEMPERANCE.

“Probably, the habitual use of alcoholic drinks, does a great deal to bring families into that low and feeble condition of body alluded to as a prolific cause of idiocy. By inspection of the Tables, it will be seen that out of three hundred and fifty-nine idiots, the condition of whose progenitors was ascertained,—ninety-nine were the children of drunkards. But this does not tell the whole story, by any means. By drunkard, is meant a person who is a notorious and habitual sot. Many persons who are habitually intemperate do not get this name, *even now*, much less would they have done so twenty-five or thirty years ago; and many of the parents of the persons named in the Tables have been dead longer than that time. A quarter of a century ago, a man might go to his bed every night muddled and sleepy with the effects of alcohol, and still not be called an intemperate man. The men who, in that day, abstained from alcoholic drinks, were remarkable exceptions to the general rule; they would be known; we shall come nearer to a true estimate, therefore, by ascertaining how many such there were. By pretty careful inquiry, with an especial view of ascertaining the number of idiots of the lowest class, whose parents were known to be *temperate* persons, it is found that *not one quarter* can be so considered.”

“The effect of *habitual* use of alcohol, even in moderate quantities, seems to be to *lymphatise* the whole bodily organization; that is, to diminish the proportion of the fibrous part of the body—that which gives enduring strength, and to make the lymphatic or the watery particles to abound in all the tissues. The children of persons, so *lymphatised*, are apt to be of the scrofulous character, above described; and their children again are very apt to be feeble in body and weak in mind. Idiots, fools, and simpletons, are common among the progeny of such persons, either in the first or second generation. Thus, directly, and indi-

rectly, alcohol is productive of a great proportion of the idiocy which now burdens the Commonwealth. If, moreover, one considers how many children of intemperate parents there are, who, without being idiots, are deficient in bodily and mental energy, and predisposed, by their very organization, to have cravings for alcoholic stimulants, it will be seen what an immense burden the drinkers of one generation throw upon the succeeding one. Many a parent, by habitual stimulus applied to his own nervous system, forms and fashions his child in such wise, that he is *more liable*, much more, to be made a drunkard, by the ordinary temptations of life, than the child of a temperate man would be, even if living from his youth upward within the extraordinary temptations of a bar-room."

"It is probable that the habitual use of alcoholic drinks, does a great deal towards bringing families into that low and feeble condition of body alluded to, in the foregoing section, as a prolific cause of idiocy, or feebleness of mind, among children."

Another cause, set down in the report, as fertile in the production of idiocy, or, of a tendency towards it, is

INTERMARRIAGE OF RELATIVES.

"By giving this as one of the remote causes of idiocy, it is not meant that even in a majority of cases, the offspring of marriage between cousins, or other near relations, will be idiotic. The cases are very numerous where nothing extraordinary is observable in the immediate offspring of such unions. On the other hand, there are so many cases where blindness, deafness, insanity, idiocy, or some peculiar bodily or mental deficiency, or a manifest tendency and liability to them, is seen in such offspring, that one is forced to believe they cannot be fortuitous. Indeed, the inference seems to be inevitable, that such intermarriages are violations of the natural law, though not such flagrant ones as always to be followed by *obvious* and severe punishment."

"If two full cousins, who are both in good health, and free from any predisposition or tendency to any particular disease or infirmity, should marry, the probability is, that their immediate offspring will have tolerably good constitutions,—though no one can say how much *less* vigorous in body and

mind they will be, than offspring born to either parent from marriage with some one of a healthy family not related by blood."

"But, on the other hand, if a man in whose constitution there lurks a predisposition to any particular disease of body or mind inherited from his *father's* family, should marry a daughter of his *father's* brother or sister, there would be a strong probability that the disease or infirmity would appear in the offspring; while the probability of such reappearance would be less, if he married a healthy cousin by his *mother's* side, and still less if he married a person free from all unhealthy predispositions, who was not related to him at all."

"It is seen by the Tables, that, out of 359 cases, in which the parentage was ascertained, seventeen were *known* to be the children of parents nearly related by blood. But as many of these cases were adults, it was impossible to ascertain, in some cases, whether their parents, who are dead, were related or not before marriage. From some collateral evidence we conclude, that at least three more cases should be added to the seventeen. This would show that more than one-twentieth of the idiots examined, are offspring of the marriage of relations. Now, as marriages between near relations are by no means in the ratio of one to twenty, nor are even, perhaps, as one to a thousand to the marriages between persons not related, it follows that the proportion of idiotic progeny is vastly greater in the former than in the latter case—(that is, taking this limited number of 400 for what little it is worth, as data for calculation.) Then it should be considered, that idiocy is only *one* form in which nature manifests that she has been offended by such intermarriages. It is probable that blindness, deafness, imbecility, and other infirmities, are more likely to be the lot of the children of parents related by blood than of others. The probability, therefore, of unhealthy or infirm issue from such marriages, becomes fearfully great, and the existence of the law against them is made out as clearly as though it were written on tables of stone. The statistics of the seventeen families, the heads of which, being blood relatives, intermarried, tells a fearful tale."

"Most of the parents were intemperate or scrofulous; some were both the one and the other; of course, there were other causes to increase chances of infirm offspring, besides that of the intermarriage. There were born unto them *ninety-five*

children, of whom forty four were idiotic, twelve others were scrofulous and puny, one was deaf, and one was a dwarf! In some cases, all the children were either idiotic or very scrofulous and puny. In one family of eight children, five were idiotic."

The report then goes on to speak at great length of the general subject of idiocy, and to give many statistical tables; and concludes in these words:—

"We have thus alluded to some of the most obvious and fertile causes of the existence of such a great number of idiots as are found in this, and all other countries, called civilized. It would swell this report to volumes, to examine these causes pathologically and minutely. Scientific research has not been our object, but we have sought diligently for every item and scrap of knowledge upon the subject of idiocy, which could be of practical use to the Legislature. In so doing, we have been obliged, in some cases, to drag, as with a net, the lowest depths of society, seeking for the pearls of truth. With these pearls there may be much worthless trash, but this will all perish, while the gems will remain indestructible; and if they are of value enough to redeem only one human being from the brutishness of idiocy, our labors will not be in vain."

This report was not without its effect. Many persons became interested in the subject; and the Legislature, ever ready to lend its aid to any national plan for promoting the cause of humanity, passed the following resolutions.

Resolved, That there be paid out of the treasury of the Commonwealth, a sum, not exceeding twenty-five hundred dollars, annually, for the term of three years, for the purpose of training and teaching ten idiotic children, to be selected by the Governor and Council, from those at public charge, or from the families of indigent persons in different parts of the Commonwealth, provided that an arrangement can be made by the Governor and Council with any suitable institution now patronized by the Commonwealth for charitable purposes; and, provided, that said appropriation shall not be made a charge upon the school fund.

Resolved, That the trustees of the institution undertaking the instruction and training of said idiots, shall, at the end of each and every year, render to the Governor and Council an account

of the actual expense incurred on account of said idiots; and if the amount expended shall be less than the sum received from the public treasury, the unexpended balance shall be deducted from the amount of the next annual appropriation.

Resolved, That the said trustees shall be authorized to require that the authorities of any town which may send any idiot pauper to them for instruction, be required to keep them supplied with comfortable and decent clothing.

Approved by the Governor May 8th, 1848.

Agreeably to the spirit of these resolutions, arrangements were made by the Governor with the Trustees of the Institution for the Blind, to assume the responsibility for the proper expenditure of the money appropriated by the State.

As the plan was conceived in the spirit of humanity, and in view of the good of a most unhappy class of men, the trustees were willing that every aid which their Institution could afford, without injustice to the Blind, should be given freely; and, for my part, as head of the Institution, I was glad to devote to this kindred work, all the time and attention that could be spared from other duties.

There was more fitness, perhaps, in the selection than was apparent at first sight. The enterprise was new. None of the Common Schools of the State could undertake the task of teaching idiots, because they had not the means of proper *training*, which must precede such teaching. The State Asylum for Lunatics had no proper accommodation for a separate class of youth, and no school for their instruction.

There had been, in this Institution, rare opportunities for teaching persons whose peculiar infirmities cut them off from access to common modes of instruction. There had been also several cases where blindness was accompanied with feebleness of intellect approaching to idiocy; and the degree of success which had crowned the effort to instruct the sufferers, gave a portion of the knowledge and faith necessary, to those who would have the management of the new experiment. To this, perhaps, should be added, what, even without any consideration, would show the fitness of the measure, that it did not seem to be the duty of any one in particular to undertake what was generally deemed a hopeless task; and that none coveted it for themselves.

The enterprise was began with an understanding of its difficulties, and with a consciousness that it might be considered, by many, a failure, even if were really successful, because the progress and improvement of a class of idiots, would be so very slow and small, when compared with that of a class of ordinary children, as to be overlooked by common observers.

Some objected to the plan on account of the little good that could be effected; but they were not more fully aware of the limited nature of the idiot's powers, than those who thus undertook to improve to the utmost his poor single talent, simply because it is poor and single, rather than bury it, and defraud Him, who lent it, of a penny of the usury which is strictly His due.

Some of the objectors were persons of intelligence and wealth; but if there should be born to them an idiotic child, though ever so infirm of body, and feeble in mind, they would spare no money, and no pains to strengthen its weakness, to prolong its flickering life to the utmost span, and to kindle its faint spark of intelligence into a flame, though ever so feeble. But these wretched creatures, who were to be taken from the almshouses, are the children of the State; and is not Massachusetts as rich, as intelligent, and as humane, as any parent within her borders?

She has manifested her disposition to do something by instituting this experimental school; and it may be well to state here what is expected as the result of it, if it should succeed according to the hopes of its friends, and be the means of bringing the whole class of idiots under observation and care.

In the first place, the process of deterioration and degradation which they undergo, in almost all cases, will be arrested.

This is a very important matter, and should demand the attention of humane men. It may be well then to consider

THE TENDENCY OF IDIOCY TO GROW WORSE IF NEGLECTED.

Idiots are now, for the most part, left to vegetate in idleness and ignorance. Nothing being done, in a systematic and scientific manner, to improve their condition, it almost certainly grows worse. Their animal appetites and propensities become developed, and grow terribly strong, because no other part of their nature is developed to counterbalance them. They are apt

to become filthy in person and habit; depraved in their tastes, mischievous in their dispositions. They sink lower and lower in the slough of degradation, presenting a painful and demoralizing spectacle during the short and wretched lives which they live.

This will be clear enough from the consideration, that in ordinary persons the indulgence of the appetites of the body, unless restrained by the development of the moral sentiments within the man, leads, inevitably, to degradation; but the poor idiot, if left to himself, will never develop those sentiments; the fires of passion will rage, until they have burned out every vestige of humanity there ever was within him. In the case of ordinary youth, we may perhaps counteract this downward tendency, by moral means,—by appeals to the moral sense; but the poor idiot has no moral sense; he once had moral *capacities*, perhaps he still has them, but they have never been developed. We must consider his case then, and all cases of the kind where the propensities are ungovernable, physiologically; and the physiological explanation of this tendency to deterioration seem to be this:—

In all healthy bodies, there is generated every day, (especially during the hours of sleep,) a certain amount of nervous stimulus, —animal spirit,—animal magnetism,—or call it what we may. This stock of nervous stimulus, the quantity of which varies greatly in various individuals, and in the same individual in various conditions of health, is to the body, what steam is to the engine, and it ought to be expended in stimulating the various organs of the body, to the performance of their various functions; the due share being applied to each one,—the stomach,—the muscles, the brain, &c. Nature allows a certain margin of oscillation in this as in other things, but excess is always followed by evil; if too much of this nervous stimulus has been expended upon the muscular system, as in long and violent exercise, there is not enough left for the stomach to digest a full meal; the system must rest until more nervous stimulus is generated, or else an indigestion follows.

Again, if the stomach is using up an undue share of this nervous stimulus to digest a heavy meal, there is not enough left to stimulate the brain to action; we cannot *think*, we cannot labor,—we nod. If, by violent effort, we divert the cur-

rent from the stomach to the brain, the stomach suffers, and the digestion is impaired.

The expenditure of this stock of nervous stimulus is placed, in a great measure, at the individual's discretion; and if a man habitually expends an undue proportion of it in the performance or any particular function, he may strengthen that, but he weakens all the others, and the longer the habit is continued, the less able they become to resume the performance of their functions. The gladiator starves his brain to feed his muscles; the student starves his muscles to feed his brain; until, by and by, the one cannot think, and the other cannot strike harder than a little child.

Now the same doctrine is true of the *divisions* of the brain, and of their functions; some are the organs of the animal appetites and propensities,—some, of the moral sentiment,—some, of the intellectual faculties. If the nervous stimulus is expended mainly upon the functions of the first, then the intellect and the moral sentiment get stinted; they have not enough exercise; and they cannot grow. Further, however, than this; habits of rest beget desire of rest, and finally inability to act. Habits of over-activity beget desire of further activity, and, at last, craving, which cannot be resisted. The long over-worked brain will not be quiet; it will not go to sleep,—it becomes deranged. The long gratified propensities become clamorous for more gratification long after the means of giving it are exhausted; they bay at the heels of him who was their master; and, at last, like the hounds of Actæon, devour him alive. In this sense it is, that the activity of the animal part of his nature, during the abeyance to the higher parts of his nature, is continually rendering the uninstructed idiot more and more violent in his appetites and propensities, and less and less capable of any development of his intellect or of his sentiments. The *exercise* of the former is ever giving to them greater activity and strength, at the expense of the latter, which grow less and less capable of action, until, at last, all possibility of their being brought into activity is gone. The balance is lost entirely, so that nothing remains of the *man*. What were *capacities* in youth, have ceased to be so, and only the *animal* remains.

It would seem that the preservation of the true balance in this expenditure of nervous stimulus is important to health; at

any rate, the loss of it to the idiots is a very serious loss, even if it be not the cause that a great majority of them die so young. Those, however, who grow to manhood, especially those in our almshouses, sink lower and lower in degradation as they advance in years. This, surely, should not be; if no one else will prevent it the State should. They were born with capacities for improvement,—let not these be extinguished; they were born *idiots only*,—let them not die *brutes*! This doctrine, that the natural tendency of great and unrestrained activity of the appetites and propensities is to increase their powers more and more, and to hinder the development of the higher nature, may be objected to by saying, that what is true of the individual, must be true of the race, and that, as these appetites and propensities are strong, and unrestrained in the early and savage state, there should be deterioration of the whole race,—whereas, in truth, there is progress. But there is this difference, that the development and character of the individuals in question is dependent mainly upon others immediately around him, whereas, the development and progress of the race is dependent upon principles planted within it by God, and may be hastened or hindered, but not stopped by human action.

In the barbarous state of society, the appetites and propensities are strong, and are freely indulged, but the race does not recede into the savage, and then into the animal condition, as the brutish person and the idiot do, because of the progressive and upward tendency innate in the race, as a whole. The efforts necessary for subsistence,—the strife with the elements, the struggle for property and for power, call into play faculties, which are higher than the sensual appetites, and which are found to bring even higher gratification; these faculties, in their turn, lead insensibly to the development of the social affections, which bring still higher gratifications; and these affections again, to the exercise of the moral sentiments and the crowning virtues of humanity, which, once tasted, give the highest pleasure of all, and make men look back, with loathing, upon sensual excesses.

Thus God leads the race gently forward by a series of rewards which increase in value with every step of progress, and which work as a check to any backward-going of the whole; while He leaves the condition of each man to himself and to those

immediately around him. A man may, of himself, plunge downwards, and pollute his own soul,—but he cannot drag his race down with him, nor even stop its upward flight. The idiot has no ‘self;’—and God will not save him, except through our efforts. This subject has been thus dwelt upon, because it is important to show that, by a proper system, there may be, at least, prevention of great evil. In the course of this report it will be shown how much has already been done in one year for the individuals who have been taken in hand.

But, it may be asked, besides arresting the downward career of this unhappy class, what can and what cannot be reasonably hoped for, as the result of this interference with their condition?—or

WHAT OBJECTS ARE TO BE AIMED AT IN ‘TRAINING IDIOTS?’

It is not expected that those who are below the grade of simpletons will ever gain such acquaintance with the common branches of learning, as will be of much ornament or *direct* use to them. It is not expected that they will be raised to a level with ordinary persons, or play an independent part in the world and take care of themselves. Great pains are taken, indeed, to teach them to read simple sentences,—to count, to write, to sing; but this is not with the expectation that they will ever be able to do these things well, or have any direct benefit from them, but mainly with a view to training and strengthening their intellectual faculties by *exercise* in the attempt to learn them.

If, then, it is not expected that they will gain any truly profitable knowledge, even of the elementary branches of learning, or become men, even of the most ordinary abilities,—what is expected, and what is the object of establishing a school for them; and what is the end and aim of all this labor and expense? Much; much every way is expected;—the end and aim are highly important.

Our theory is, that these poor creatures possess not only the instinct and propensities which man has in common with the brutes, but that, moreover, they possess the feeble germs of those intellectual faculties, moral sentiments, and social affections which in man are superadded to his animal nature, and which make the crowning glory of humanity.

A few of the idiots have really feeble perceptive faculties than dogs and monkies; it may be, that with ever so much instruction, they will remain inferior to those brutes, in mere *knowledge*; but then they have a feeble portion of that light of the soul, not one ray of which could ever be discovered in the nature of dogs and monkies, were they trained and taught, generation after generation to the end of time.

Now, it is proposed not only to train and develop, as much as possible, the feeble intellectual powers of the idiot, -but also, to call out and strengthen, as much as may be, the dormant, or feeble capacities of every part of his nature. The most of them are now left in ignorance and in idleness. Nothing being done to improve their condition, of course it must grow worse.

It is proposed, therefore, to show our reverence for God's plain will, and to acknowledge the common brotherhood of man, by taking these, the most unfortunate of His children, and attempting to lift them up to a place, humble though it be, upon the common platform of humanity.

It is hoped to train them up to cleanliness and decency; to prevent, or root out vicious and debasing habits; to moderate their gluttonous appetites; and to lessen the strength of the animal nature, generally, by calling into some activity the higher feelings and desires, and by substituting constant occupation for idleness.

It is proposed to train all the senses and perceptive faculties by constant and varied exercise; to strengthen the power of attention; to teach, as much as possible, the rudiments of knowledge; to develop the muscular system; and to give some degree of dexterity in simple handicraft. Efforts will be made to call out their social affections, and to lessen their inordinate selfishness, by awakening some feeling of regard for others, in return for kindness and love manifested towards them.

The still harder task will be attempted of appealing to the moral sense, and drawing out what little capacity there may exist for comprehending right for exercising conscience, and for developing the religious sentiment.

It is hoped that part of them will gain some really useful knowledge; that most of them will become cleanly, decent, temperate, and industrious; and that all of them will be better and happier from the efforts made in their behalf.

If the experiment should succeed, the good done to the ten individuals, who are the subjects of it, compared to the good that must follow to others, will be as the grain of mustard seed, to the goodly tree, in whose branches the fowls of the air find rest. The capacity of idiots for culture once shown, Massachusetts will gather them from the almshouses and the by-places, and give them careful nurture and instruction: and when Massachusetts shall show to her sister States these redeemed ones, snatched from the slough of brutishness, and made tidy, and decent, and industrious, and happy,—then her example of true and practical christianity will be followed by others; and thousands, who are now groveling in filth, and depravity, and wretchedness,—the parias of civilization, will be brought back to the bosom of society, and treated with that kindly regard to which their terrible calamity entitles them.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE SCHOOL.

Three years was the period fixed upon for this experiment, not as the time that is sufficient for training and teaching idiots, to the extent of their capacity, but as the shortest time in which much manifest and satisfactory improvement can be made in their bodily and mental condition.

One year of the three years has already been spent in the trial, and the result, thus far, is most encouraging, as will presently be shown.

The first thing, was to procure a competent instructor, who should devote all his time and energies to the new and difficult task: for this purpose, Mr. James B. Richards was engaged. He had been employed for many years as a teacher in Boston, and possessed many of the necessary qualities in an eminent degree. In order to start with every advantage that could be had from the experience of others, Mr. Richards went to Europe to learn, by personal observation, the method of instruction pursued in the new school at Paris. It proved, indeed, that there was little or nothing to be learnt there about the practical part of the work, that would not have been arrived at here, by any intelligent person, who started with correct views of the principle which underlies the whole subject. It was something, however, to know even that.

✕ Preparations were made during the summer of 1848, for organizing the school upon the plan of a family. Mrs. McDon-

ald, a kind and motherly person, and most efficient house-keeper, was engaged as matron, and she, with intelligent domestics, made arrangements for receiving the children into a clean, comfortable, and pleasant home.

Mr. Richards having returned in the autumn, the first scholars were received in October, and he began the work of instruction with zeal and vigor. The whole number received has been thirteen, and the following are their names and ages:—

Albert Fitz,	Aged 12, Idiot of the second class.
Sylvanus W. Walker,	" 5, Idiot " " third "
George S. Clapp,	" 8, Idiot " " first "
Warren C. Mantur,	" 14, Idiot and deranged.
Gilman Clough,	" 9, Simpleton.
George T. Rowell,	" 9, Idiot of the third "
Daniel H. Peatfield,	" 7, Idiot " " " "
Edmund S. Field,	" 7, Idiot " " second "
Charles Davis,	" 14, Idiot and insane.
Wm. F. Soule,	" 6, Idiot and hydrocephalic.
James Winchester,	" 9, Idiot of the third class.
Michael Mahers,	" 12, Idiot and deranged.
James W. Smith,	" 11, Idiot of the third class.

Besides these beneficiaries of the State, three private pupils have been received; but of these it is not necessary to render an account here.

One of the State pupils, W. F. Soule, was found to be hydrocephalic, and hopelessly diseased; another, Charles Davis, proved to be insane, and incapable of instruction in a class; and another, possessed of too much intellect to be fairly included among idiots; they were, therefore, all discharged soon after admission.

The pupils did not all arrive at the same time; in fact, there was so much delay, that the school could not be said fairly to have got into operation for sometime after its nominal commencement.

The selection was not made with sufficient care, as was apparent soon after the boys arrived. Too much reliance was placed upon the description given of them by others. By the endeavors to have such as would present a fair sample of the capacity of the class for improvement, the error had been

committed in having an unfavorable sample. The pupils hardly do justice to the class they are intended to represent. The selection was not indeed an easy matter. It was required by the Resolves, that the subjects of the experiment should all be paupers, or children of indigent parents, as they were to be paid for by the State. This made it less likely that the children would have received a judicious kind of treatment at home, and such advantages as can be commanded by pecuniary means.

It was required that they should be from different parts of the State. No other restriction was laid upon the choice; although it was expected, of course, that each child should come fairly within the class for whose benefit the experiment was made, viz.: those, who by reason of mental deficiency, cannot be taught in the common way. This class, however, is a very large one, and comprehends persons who differ widely from each other in capacity for improvement. It was desirable to have some of the best and some of the worst specimens of the class; and those selected, as it has proved, are, for the most part, of the worst kind.

This diversity among idiots in capacity for improvement, is a matter which is little known, although it is very important, and ought to be understood; it leads to a consideration of the

IMPORTANCE OF A PROPER CLASSIFICATION OF IDIOTIC PERSONS.

Many a child is neglected as being hopelessly idiotic, who, with a little attention, and wise treatment, might be greatly improved, trained up to associate with common children, and, finally, enabled to take care of himself; while others, who are, from their very organization, necessarily idiotic for life, have great care and pains expended upon them, which, proving vain, leads to the belief of the incapacity of any of the class for improvement.

One of the most eminent teachers in Massachusetts lately expressed his incredulity about the improvement of idiots, because he had known a person, grown to man's estate, who plunged his hand into a vessel of hot *mush*, or pudding, and, though severely burned, did not learn enough to dread the heat, but would repeat the experiment upon the very next opportunity. The case is not so bad as that of an adult idiot, in a neighboring town, who, sometimes, in cramming food into his

mouth, caught his fingers between his teeth, and, not knowing what pained him, used to howl and bite harder and harder, until he was severely hurt. Some of our pupils, were, in certain respects, even lower than these, for they had not knowledge, or muscular energy enough, to bite any thing when placed between their jaws,—they could only suck. Even these have greatly improved; but, granting such cases to be nearly hopeless, it is very unwise to argue from them, the incapacity of the class of idiots for improvement, especially, as in that class are usually comprehended many who do not belong there, and, who, if the subject were better understood by the public, would be provided with instruction suitable to their condition. Our common school system is so liberal in its principles, so excellent, and so widely extended in its operation, that we are apt to suppose it suffices for the wants of all the community; but, when we come to examine closely, we find a great many children to whose wants we cannot minister.

Besides the blind, the mutes, and the idiots, there are many, who, by reason of some mental peculiarity, or infirmity, cannot be classed with other children, and taught by the common methods. They need some peculiar care, and a course of instruction adapted expressly to their condition. Some children have been offered here for admission, who were not idiotic, but who could not be taught in common schools, and for whom no school is provided.*"

It was not easy to collect ten boys who should all be manifestly deficient in intellect, and some of whom should be of each grade of idiocy; because there is no classification that is generally known and received. To form a good one is difficult, as all attempts to classify exceptional cases must be. If a classification were based upon the *causes* of idiocy, it might be, that of idiots whose brains cannot act naturally for want of size; and idiots whose brains cannot act naturally, owing to various other physical causes. This would, perhaps, be a more scien-

* Schools, for such exceptional cases, are much needed; and it is gratifying, to be able to announce, that one has already been opened in Barre, by Dr. Wilbur. It seems to be conducted with skill and judgment, by kind and intelligent persons. It will be sought by those whose pecuniary means enable them to bring all the aid and appliances of science to supply the mental deficiencies, or correct the mental irregularities of their children. It gives promise of great good.

tific classification than the one adopted in this report. It would give one very small class of pure idiots, resembling each other as closely as ordinary men do; and a second, very much larger, comprehending a vast variety of persons, resembling each other only in the lack of sufficient mind for the common purposes of life. This class might be subdivided, according to the physical causes of the mental infirmity, or derangement. Indeed, the word *deranged*, might be well applied to this whole class, were it not, that, by popular usage, it denotes persons whose minds have once been sound, but have become disordered, or *deranged*. In the case of those who are idiotic from birth, the physical cause, whatever it may be, prevents the brain from developing itself, and performing its functions harmoniously; it never gets to be in order; it does not become attuned to *concert pitch* with others, therefore, cannot properly be said to *become* deranged; although, compared with the greater harmony of action existing among ordinary men, it is deranged.

The functions of the brain being very various; some serving to direct and promote the general functions of the body, and others serving as a medium for the manifestation of mind, and the latter, of course, being as various as are the faculties, capacities, and affections of the mind; the possible combinations among them are, apparently, exhaustless;—hence the endless variety of individual character. In order to have a normal development of character, each one of these functions must be normally performed, or at least, must not vary widely from the common standard. The lack of certain functions will cause corresponding infirmity in the resulting character; undue action of any one function will produce undue activity or violence even in the corresponding development of character; and the chances for *perfect* harmony among the whole is very small indeed, not one, perhaps, in a million. The chance for this perfect harmony existing at the same time with the greatest possible power in the intellectual or in the moral nature, is, of course, very small; and for its existence, with the greatest power in *both these*, the chance is so small, that, in the countless generations that have been evolved, it may be, that not one individual, so endowed, has yet appeared. When, by reason of infirmity, or defect of any part of the brain, or undue performance of its functions, its harmonious development and action is so far disturbed that

there cannot result sufficient mental development for self-guidance, the individual is considered idiotic.

The degree, and the kind of idiocy, resulting from the imperfect and inharmonious performance of the functions of the brain, must be as various as the various possible combinations in the actions of these functions, which we have seen to be exhaustless. Hence, in the second great class of idiots, would be embraced individuals differing more widely with each other than those of the first class; and much more than ordinary men differ with each other. There would be the moping idiot, who sits and drivels his life away, in stupid inattention, and listless inaction; the wild and ungovernable idiot, who cannot be at rest at all, but seems driven, by inward disturbing force, to strange and violent actions, like those of a mad-man;—and every variety between these two extremes.

The classification proposed in the report of the Massachusetts Commissioners, divides the subjects of it into three classes, founded upon the *degree* of their idiocy, or privation of intellect. SIMPLETONS being the highest, FOOLS the next, and IDIOTS proper; the lowest. If this classification were intended for scientific purposes, it could be expressed in scientific language; but being intended not for professional but general readers, and designed to enable them to understand better the condition of the unhappy persons in whom they may happen to be interested, terms are used in their common and popular sense, whether it be the most scientific or not.

This classification assumes that the subjects of it are *not* persons absolutely *devoid* of *mind*, but merely persons of feeble mind; that the idiot proper is the most feeble, the simpleton the least so. It is important that this principle should be kept in view, so that the great advantages of classification may be had, without the disadvantages that sometimes attend it. Nature produces individual men and not classes. Putting men into a class, is too apt to put them into a *caste*; sometimes even it puts them out of the pale of humanity. This is seen in the case of our artificial class of convicts or criminals;—they suffer by being considered as a class or caste, differing from other men not in degree of guiltiness only, (as is in truth the case) but differing absolutely and essentially,—being *criminals*, while other men are *not criminals*. Such classification may give undue pride to

the one, and despair to the other. Similar effects may follow the classification of men into Christians and heathens; and the petty subdivision into saints and world's people. Evil may arise from the misuse of the term *Idiot*, as the name of a class, if it causes them to be considered as a distinct order of persons, and different from other men in being utterly devoid of mind, for it will be considered useless to try to teach those who have no mind at all; but if they are considered as differing from others not in kind, but in degree only,—as merely having *feeble* minds, then their very feebleness, like that of little children, will commend them to our hearts. Whatever classification of men is made, the mantle of humanity should be thrown over the whole, that its ample folds may cover every one, and that none be lost to the human family.

It is impossible, of course, to determine exactly the degree of intelligence which a person must manifest in order to escape the category of simpleton, and maintain a place among men of common sense. There is neutral ground on either side of the dividing line, and a person may sometimes be upon the one and sometimes upon the other, according to the standard of comparison by which he is tried. The same difficulty arises in some cases about deciding whether a person is a fool, or an idiot of the next lowest degree; but an approximation can always be made; and in order to do this we may consider the

USE OF LANGUAGE AS A BASIS OF CLASSIFICATION OF IDIOTS.

There are various things to be taken into the consideration when making a classification of idiots, but the simplest and surest of any single test is that of *SPEECH*, or the power of using and understanding some kind of language as signs of thought. If a child, having no physical imperfection in the organs of speech, can hear perfectly, and yet does not learn to speak in the usual time and manner, it may be attributed almost certainly to some mental defect arising from physical infirmity of the brain or nervous system. If the infirmity be (as is usually the case) congenital and organic, it will, in all probability, be permanent; if it be only functional, it may be cured. It is very important that the nature of the infirmity or imperfection be ascertained early, in order to avoid errors in treatment.

The simpleton is very backward about learning to talk.

During a long time he uses only nouns and verbs; but at last he learns to make simple sentences; he comes to use all the principal parts of speech, and to express himself with tolerable correctness about simple matters of fact; but he cannot make or understand involved sentences, or those expressive of abstract ideas. Spoken words, the audible signs of thought, become tolerably familiar to him; but printed words, the visible representations of the audible signs of thought, being a remove farther off, are understood with greater difficulty; and though he may read simple sentences, he cannot comprehend the more abstruse ones, or such as relate to things which are not the immediate object of sense; much less can he find pleasure in the graces of style.

The idiot of the second class, or the fool, learns to speak still more tardily and imperfectly. While a child, he uses only the names of things. When a youth, he may perhaps master the two principal parts of speech, nouns and verbs; the latter however, in their simplest forms only. Pronouns, conditional verbs, adverbs, &c., are incomprehensible signs to him. If he uses a short sentence containing them, it is as a complex sign of a single thing;—a long noun; or else he repeats them as a parrot does, without understanding them.

The idiot of the lowest class utters only a few simple sounds, or interjections which are expressive of his appetites, or strong emotions; and which are not peculiarly parts of human speech, for animals also use interjections. The *oh!* and *ah!* of the idiot are hardly to be considered parts of speech, any more than the bark or growl of a dog.

Such is the condition of different classes of uninstructed idiots with regard to the use of language so far as I have been able to observe them. I know not whether any observations have been made by others, upon this means of testing the degree of idiocy by the capacity for using language *as signs of thought*: but it seems to be more valuable than any other. The faculty of speech is improved of course with the mental improvement. Great care must be used in testing the degree of intellect by the faculty of speech, not to overlook any malformation that may exist in the structure of the organs, or any physical inability to use them. A child may lisp so badly as hardly to be understood; or he may be unable to pronounce certain words; but,

no matter, if he only *understands* your speech—if he can express by ever so rude a sound, or by any sign whatever, his *sense of the meaning and value* of words, the defect is not in his intellect. The power of *understanding* language, and not the use of the vocal organs is the true test. It is easy to conceive that a child having the sense of hearing, but unable to articulate, may understand perfectly a grammatical sentence, and frame a grammatical answer in some kind of signs; but a dumb child who is not deaf or idiotic, would be a rare phenomenon, notwithstanding that almost all parents of deaf-mutes persist for many years in thinking their children can hear.

There is another precaution to be used in testing the degree of intellect by the knowledge of language, and that is, not to confound *garrulity* with copiousness of language. Some loquacious people who have really a very limited knowledge of language, and cannot understand its more intricate and delicate play, ring incessant changes upon their scanty stock of words, and *talk* more than others who thoroughly understand their own and foreign tongues in their most subtle forms; just as a person may make more *noise* upon an instrument with a few keys, than a good musician creates upon an instrument of greater compass by whole octaves. So it is with the class here treated of; a garrulous person of the class of fools, may *talk* more with his few and simple words, than a taciturn simpleton does; though the latter can form and understand sentences, which would be entirely incomprehensible by the former.

These remarks, may perhaps help parents and others who are perplexed about the backwardness of children of feeble intellect to understand them better. If a child can really comprehend words, expressive of abstract qualities, he is not an idiot of the lowest class, and must not be treated as such. If he can form a correct sentence containing different parts of speech, he is not even an idiot of the second class; if he can construct, involved sentences, containing abstract terms, and verbs in the conditional sense, he is hardly a simpleton.

CHILDREN, NOT REALLY IDIOTIC, ARE SOMETIMES CLASSED WITH IDIOTS.

Perplexity sometimes arises about children, who seem to be sensible in some respects, and altogether foolish in others; and the perplexity cannot well be removed by any other explanation.

than that given by the doctrine of the plurality of faculties, and their comparative independence of each other.

A man may be utterly wanting in what is called a musical ear, so as not to be able to distinguish tunes; or an eye for colors, so as not to be able to distinguish shades of marked difference; and, as this may depend not upon the construction of the eye or ear, since such persons can hear very feeble sounds, and see very keenly, so as to distinguish the minutest difference in *forms*, but upon some peculiarity or imperfection in the brain or nervous system;—so from some similar peculiarity or imperfection, a person may be unable to distinguish the outlines and *forms* of letters, so that he cannot combine them into words and read; that is, he cannot understand the *visible signs* of words, though he may understand their *audible signs*, and can comprehend a spoken sentence, which he cannot be made to learn from a book.

It would be easy to ascend from such material perceptions to those of a more abstract nature, as for instance in the relations of numbers. One man sees with difficulty the relation between seven and fifteen, while another by the flash of intuition, sees every possible relation among millions of units, and runs over the cubes and squares of high numbers as we run over the multiplication table. In mathematics he has extraordinary skill, while in other respects, he is hardly our equal. Now no conceivable difference in training can explain this difference in power; nothing can do it but the supposition of an independent faculty, whose office is the perception of the relations of numbers. The power and condition of this faculty must depend beyond question, upon the nature and condition of some part of the bodily organization; and probably upon some part especially devoted to it. The material, or bodily instrumentality through which the mind of Zerah Colburn, saw the manifold relations and combinations of high numbers, was as much superior in power and accuracy to that enjoyed by ordinary minds, as the great Rosse telescope is to an opera glass; yet Colburn's mind enjoyed no uncommon instrument for bringing *other* relations besides those of numbers,—moral relations, for instance, within its ken. His faculty for seeing relations of numbers was hardly of more use to him in writing his very poor sermons, than a telescope would be for ploughing a corn field.

From the relations of numbers there is but a step to other abstract relations; and if this were the place, it would be easy to apply the same reasoning to moral relations, but it is not, and what has been said, must suffice for explanation of what has gone before, and what will follow.

It is commonly concluded that if a boy cannot learn to read, as other boys do, he is therefore stupid; but this does not necessarily follow, by any means. As inability to distinguish relations in musical sounds, or difference of shades in color, may arise from some unimportant imperfection in the cerebral structure or functions, so may an inability to distinguish the *form* of letters. The same doctrine explains many peculiarities which appear in the more purely intellectual faculties. Some youth are considered as foolish, because while they perceive readily the existence and relations of facts and things about them, they fail to reason correctly, or to draw the proper inferences from them; on the other hand, the same is true of those who seem blind to most of the things and relations about them, but contrive to generalize well and act wisely.

May it not be that imperfections and peculiarities in the moral sense, and even in the affections, arise from similar causes; and may not one child be as truly unable to perceive moral relations and duties, as another is to perceive the difference between *fa* and *sol*, or between green and blue? If it be so, then surely blame and punishment are as little deserved in the one case as in the other.

The object of these remarks is to show, that great care and discrimination should be used, in judging and treating those persons, especially children, who seem to differ widely from the common standard of intellect or morals.

INDIRECT BENEFITS OF A SCHOOL FOR IDIOTS.

It will, doubtless, be one of the indirect benefits of a school for idiots, that it will spread greater knowledge upon the subject of idiocy in the community, and thus will save many children, who really have mental capacity, from being condemned as incapable of improvement. It will probabably do even more than this, for there is no doubt that children of feeble intellect are sometimes made worse, perhaps, rendered imbecile, by unwise and harsh treatment. * It sometimes happens, that the child of

an irritable parent cannot, or does not readily understand and obey a command, upon which the parent becomes vexed, and scolds; and, thinking the child's dulness to be wilful obstinacy, he becomes excited and angry, and beats it, in some cases very severely. These outbreaks of the parent, if very frequent, do not leave time for the child to recover his natural tone of mind; his habitual state becomes that of fear; and not having cunning enough to find refuge in deceit, he submits, in despair, to a course of treatment, which, little by little, breaks down his spirit, completely cows him, and makes him a simpleton, or worse. The parent, perhaps, does not suspect, all this while, that he is, himself, cruelly wrong; he does not think at all about it; but vents his anger upon the child, as often as its stupidity, which he calls obstinacy, is manifested.

A case which illustrates the effect of this kind of treatment may be mentioned here, though a little out of place. My attention being called, a short time ago, to a boy, said to be idiotic and unmanageable, I went to his father's house to see him. It was a dilapidated and dirty room, dimly lighted, and intensely heated by a cooking-stove. There were several children, all of them dirty, but all decently clad, except one, a boy of thirteen, who was literally covered with rags. On opening the door, this boy ran skulking away, and hid himself behind the cooking-stove. He soon peered out, with a look of great terror, as if in fear for his life, or of a severe whipping. By degrees, and with great care, I got near him, though he trembled greatly, and would, occasionally, dart away from one corner of the room to another. When not running, he moved about with the stealthy tread of a cat, putting down his foot as carefully as if treading on ice, which he feared would break under him, and keeping his eyes fixed upon me. After long attempts to quiet him, and assure him, he was induced to take from my hand an apple, which he ran away with, and began to devour most voraciously. It was very unusual for him to show even so much confidence in a stranger. He commonly ran from any one who came in; and, if approached, he would scream aloud, and be convulsed with terror. It was considered remarkable, that he, at last, very timidly, gave me the tip of his finger to shake hands at my departure. The following description of him is by a very intelligent and humane gentleman, who first drew my attention to him:—

DR. S. G. HOWE :

DEAR SIR,—My attention was directed to this boy, in the first place, by his father, being the occupant of one of our tenements. When I approached him, he stealthily moved away, as if he had been doing something wrong ; I followed him to ascertain what, when his speed increased so much, as still more to excite my curiosity ; he ran into the house, and got under the bed ; on my approaching him, his agony of fear appeared so intense, that, to give him relief, I went away. I then learnt from his father that he was an *innocent*, as he was called,—or idiotic. Since then, I have, many times, endeavored to approach him, and coax him ;—but never with success. His fear of me was so great, that I gave him up. I have, however, frequently observed him ; he would mingle with his playmates, but not partake of their plays. He appeared to be dull, and with an idiotic expression ; but, under the influence of fear, might be violent, and, perhaps, dangerous. It was his entirely dependent condition, and melancholy appearance, that excited my interest to solicit for him the benefit of the charity of the State, and the humanity of yourself,

I remain, very respectfully, yours,

SAM'L. DOWNER, JR.

This boy was quite unmanageable, by any means within reach of his father, or friends. They knew no way to make him obey, but that of force and blows. He was formerly a tolerably bright boy, but he had been in this sad condition for years, and was rapidly growing worse. He seemed to live in continual terror, and seldom spoke a word. The first time that I heard him utter a word, was, one day, when his father took hold of him, to make him obey some command, upon which, with his knees fairly knocking, and his body trembling all over, he screamed convulsively—'will-good boy'—'will-good boy !' This was enough to show, that whatever might have been the first cause of his strange condition, the daily treatment he was receiving, was gradually crushing his feeble intellect, and would tend to drive him into hopeless idiocy, or insanity. And yet, his father was a sober, well-meaning man, and not a cruel

parent. He simply did not know how to govern his own feelings, and to *train* those of this unfortunate child. The boy was therefore taken into our school at once. He has been there but a few weeks, and the change in him is already most remarkable. He is still a little shy, but he has lost all appearance of terror; he not only comes readily when called, but often goes up to those belonging to the house, and puts his arms affectionately about them, and returns their caresses. He takes his place in the class, and strives to imitate all the motions of the scholars, and obey the signs of the teacher. He can select the letters of the alphabet, and understands a few words. He is obedient and docile, and tries hard to learn with the others. He is affectionate, and much gratified by any mark of praise or approval. He begins to talk, and is rapidly improving in every respect.

The following letter, from Mr. Downer, will show how much, in the opinion of that gentleman, he has improved, under the treatment he has received, in his new home. The improvement is mainly attributable to the spirit of gentleness, which pervades the household. This has quieted all his terrors, and soothed his spirit, so that he is able to give attention to the judicious instruction which Mr. Richards imparts to him.

Boston, February 14, 1850.

Dr. S. G. HOWE:

"DEAR SIR,—I availed myself, to day, of your invitation, to visit the Institution for the benefit of the Feeble-minded, that I might have an opportunity of witnessing the improvement, (if any,) of the boy, Michael Mah, who has been enjoying its privileges; but I hardly know how to comply with your request, to communicate how his present appearance struck me, as compared to that which he exhibited, before being placed there. When I remember his former wild, and almost frantic demeanor, when approached by any one, and the apparent impossibility of communicating with him, and now see him standing in his class, playing with his fellows, and willingly and familiarly approaching me, examining what I gave him; and when I see him, already, selecting articles, named by his teacher, and even correctly pronouncing some words printed on cards,—improvement, does not convey the idea presented to my mind;—it is creation; it is making him anew.

I also noticed an entire change in his manner of moving his hands, and whole body. In truth, as he stood in his class, it was with difficulty I recognized him, so changed was his appearance. I was struck, particularly, by the fresh and healthy appearance of his skin and complexion, which, formerly, was pale and haggard.

If, sir, he is a fair sample of what training, and education can do, for idiots, I can only say, God speed you in your endeavors to build up such an institution; it has but to be known, to be appreciated, and to have the views of its founders carried into successful operation.

I remain, very truly, yours,

SAM'L. DOWNER, JR.

ADVANTAGE OF HAVING PUPILS OF DIFFERENT GRADES OF IDIOCY.

In choosing idiotic persons for the experiment, it was necessary, that they should all be young; it was desirable that the greatest number should be of the lowest class; but, that there should be some representing each class,—from the speechless idiot, to the simpleton.

This was not merely to test the capacity of each class for instruction and improvement, but likewise to profit by that beautiful law of nature, in virtue of which, children of different ages, are made mutual instructors.

In a brood of birds, the little nestlings have nothing to teach each other; there are, therefore, no elder and younger chicks. In the race of animals, the young of one year become perfect and independent, before those of the next appear; and they know not the brothers and sisters that come after them.

There is no true home, but the human home; there is no true family, but the human family. In it, the elder child is the teacher of the younger. Daily and hourly he is giving lessons, such as no hireling,—no, not even the parent can give; and in return, he himself finds both pleasure and profit in every effort that he makes. The lisping girl, in repeating over, as she loves dearly to do, the new words she has learned, and the new things she has seen, to the wondering listener in the nursery, is not only giving him a lesson in language, but reciting

her own, and fastening it more firmly in her memory. She makes good the maxim, that the best way to learn a thing, is to try to teach it.

The same principle holds good as they grow older, save that it increases in importance, for now the moral natures are more fully at work, and act, and react upon each other with great power. The elder loves to revive the pleasant thoughts—the kindly emotions she has experienced, by relating them to the younger, who strives to tune his heart to sweet accord with hers; and thus she strengthens her own good feelings, while she is calling forth his. But, on the other hand, she revives and strengthens her unkind feelings, and her unlovely dispositions, by every show which she makes of them to him, who, in his turn, has the like feelings called to life, in his own breast. And so they go on,—through childhood and youth; the die, itself, growing harder by every impress it gives to the mould.

The effect of this principle, for good, or for evil, according as it is improved, or neglected, may be seen in every family of children. The greatest advantage may be derived from it, when the difference of age is two, or three years; a wide departure from this, either way, is not desirable. Its importance may be learned, by witnessing the effects of bringing up children alone, or without the society of those somewhere near them in age. To be fatherless, or motherless, is a great misfortune to a child; to be brotherless or sisterless, is not a small one.

Now in a school of idiots like ours, where boys are about the same age, this principle would be violated, if they were all of the same *class*; but when they are of different degrees of idiocy, they are to each other, as elder and younger children, though they may be of the same age; the simpleton of ten years of age, is to the fool of ten or twelve, as a youth is to a child; the fool is to the idiot, as a child is to an infant. Some advantage was hoped from this arrangement, nor has that hope been disappointed.

It was necessary to receive some pupils without having seen them, upon the strength of descriptions given by those who had the care of them; and it proved that in some cases, such persons were mistaken in their views. For instance, a boy was sent from the almshouse, in Roxbury, as an idiot, and received as such. He was at once subjected to a regular course of cold

bathing, exercise, diet, and discipline, the good effects of which were very apparent in a few weeks. His system was aroused, and he manifested considerable mental activity, and capacity for improvement. In a short time it became clear, that he had intellect enough to be taught by the common methods, and that he could hardly be called a simpleton. It would not have been fair, therefore, to exhibit him as a proof of what could be done for idiotic children, and he was, accordingly, dismissed, as lacking the qualifications, or rather, disqualifications necessary for our school.

PHYSICAL, OR BODILY TRAINING AIDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL POWER.

The first, and most important object aimed at, during the year, has been the improvement of the bodily condition of the scholars by physical TRAINING, that is, by regular and systematic exercises, for invigorating the body, generally; for increasing the muscular strength, and activity; for giving more ready and perfect command over all the motions of the body and limbs; and for quickening all the senses.

Whatever system is adopted for the instruction of idiots, the foundation of it must be laid in physical education, that is, thorough bodily training. When a common boy first comes under the teacher's care, this training has generally been accomplished; his body has been broken in, as it were, to the service of his will; he has learned, in the games and sports of childhood, and in various ways, to have prompt and entire command of all his muscles. It is not so with the idiot.

Of the whole number received in our school, not one had the usual degree of activity and command of muscular motion; in other words, quickness of eye and hand. Some could walk about, and use their hands and limbs in simple motions; while the others were very deficient in the use of their muscles; and two were without any power of locomotion, and without command of the voluntary muscles.

The first thing then was to invigorate their bodies, and to give them more complete command over all the muscles. This has been done by diet, by bathing, by walking, and running in the open air, and by various gymnastic exercises, such

as standing erect, raising first one foot then the other, one arm, and then the other; by marching; by climbing on ladders; by swinging dumb-bells; by holding out objects at arm's length; by tossing and catching balls; and by various movements of the body and limbs, at the word of command. This has been followed up with such variations as occurred to the teacher, in order to prevent monotony;—and with the most marked effect. Some of these will be noticed in the history of particular cases, suffice it to say here, generally, that a manifest improvement has taken place, not only in the health and appearance of the boys, but in their capacity for taking care of themselves.

But this is not all, by any means. Bodily training is an important agent in the development of the mental and moral powers, though it seems only to promote muscular strength, and manual dexterity. When a child is learning to balance himself on his feet, he is doing something for his mind as well as for his body; he is training his mental faculties, as well as his muscular fibres; and when he first toddles from the supporting corner to his mother's arms, he brings into play enterprise and courage, as well as arms and legs. And so it is through childhood, boyhood, and youth. Every new effort, every new triumph over difficulties, every new game, every new undertaking, be it ever so simple, which gives dexterity and hardihood of body, gives also quickness, and vigor of mind. The marble, the top, and the hoop; the sledge, the skates, and the ball; the boat, the gun, and the horse, may, each and all of them, be of priceless value to the mind. Exercises with them need not be mere idle sports and useless pastimes; they are, when well timed, better both for body and mind, than ill-timed tasks, and lessons.

The idiotic child seldom shows a taste for any toys, except the very simplest;—sometimes not even for these. What little taste, however, he may have, should be cultivated. If he leaves the rattle, and comes to blow a tin whistle, or drag a wooden horse, it is a sign of *progress*; he must be encouraged in it; and his teacher must not lose hope if he creeps when he would have him run. The poor boy must ever be *behind* ordinary boys. Before he can trundle a hoop, a bright lad may learn to drive a locomotive engine; before he can fly a kite, the other may learn to soar in a balloon; before he can cross a pond upon skates, the other may be ex-

ploring the arctic regions. But this very helplessness should appeal to our hearts; and because the poor creature, shorn of the wings of intellect, and crippled in all his faculties, is lagging far behind in the general race of progress, we should lend him a helping hand, lest he be entirely lost.

It is not merely desirable, but it is sometimes absolutely necessary to commence the instruction of idiots with physical training, for some of them have never had their muscular system developed at all. A description of one of our pupils will show this.

Sylvanus Walker, aged six years; height, or rather length, for he had never learned to stand upright, was three feet four inches; weight, thirty-one pounds; depth of chest, six inches and three-quarters; breadth of chest, seven and one-half inches.

His temperament is lymphatic-nervous; skin, fair; hair, dark; eyes, dark brown. Dimensions of cranium, from ear to ear, over the top of skull, 10.44 inches; from root of nose to occipital spine, 10.13 inches.

The cause of his idiocy, according to his mother's account, was mismanagement. Soon after his birth, a neighbor, who was kindly acting as nurse and assistant, took the poor babe close to a hot stove, and began to rub its head with *strong rum*, warming his head by the stove, in order to make it soak in the rum the better, and rubbing with her hand, diligently, for a long time, until a whole tea-cup full had been used. Of course, a considerable portion must have been absorbed, and the effect upon the nervous system very powerful. The babe slept profoundly, and could not be aroused until the third day!

When brought to our school, his senses were very inactive and dull; his eyes were languid in their expression,—almost vacant indeed, and very slow in their motions; his hearing was, apparently more active than his sight, for, while he rarely noticed visible objects, he showed some liveliness and interest in musical sounds. Touch, or rather tactile sensibility, was almost wanting in his hands, and other parts of his body.

He had no power of locomotion, whatever; he could not stand upon his feet, nor sit up alone in a chair, nor even creep on his hands and knees. He lay quietly upon the floor, or wherever they placed him, by the hour together, or even all day long; and made no other movement than, once in a while, to raise his

head upon his hand, with his elbow resting on the floor. In this posture, he sometimes played with any bright thing that came within the reach of his other hand. This was the extent of his amusement. He had no other occupation, save that of eating, or rather drinking, for he *could not chew* solid food, and was nourished mainly upon milk, of which he consumed large quantities; his mother said, sometimes nearly a gallon a day. He had not learned to feed himself at all. He had no more sense of decency, when brought to us, than an infant.

In respect to intellect, he was an idiot. He could not speak a dozen words, and not even those distinctly. He had no knowledge, no desires, no affections.

At an age when other boys were at school, or at their sports, this poor little fellow lay motionless upon the floor, or bed, or wherever they placed him, without amusement, and without occupation; and so he would probably have lain during all the years of his youth. He would not have learned to creep, or to talk, had he lived to the age of manhood, for his limbs were powerless, and his parents did not know how to strengthen them, or how to teach him language.

The change and improvement caused in this boy's condition, by one year's training, has been most gratifying. He has been bathed daily in cold water; his limbs have been rubbed; he has been dragged about in the open air, in a little waggon, by the other boys; his muscles have been exercised; he has been made to grasp with his hands, and gradually to raise himself up by them. He was held up, and made to bear a little of his weight upon his lower limbs,—then a little more, until, at last, to his great delight, he was able to go about alone, by holding on the wall, or to one's finger, even to go up stairs, by clinging to the balusters. He can go around a large table, by merely resting one hand on the edge of it. The like improvement has taken place in his habits; he is observant of decency; he calls, when he wants any assistance; he can sit at the table, and chew his food, and even feed himself pretty well.

His cheeks begin to glow with color; his eye is much brighter; he gives attention to what is passing around him; and his whole countenance is more expressive of thought. His improvement in language is equally great; he has learned many words, and can construct many simple sentences. His affections begin

to be developed, and he manifests his attachment to persons by unmistakable signs. During an absence of several weeks, he did not forget his teacher, and used to show to his mother, that he wanted to see Mr. Richards. Such is the effect of a year's training; and it is but the beginning, for this boy will doubtless go on improving, and advancing more rapidly for every step heretofore gained. He was put down on the list as an idiot of the lowest kind, for he was quite in an idiotic condition, nor was there any means of knowing his latent capacities; it will not be surprising, however, if he should be raised, not only to the highest grade of idiots, or simpletons, but even lifted quite above that class. His case may prove to be one of those mentioned under the head of Classification, which are neglected, because, by mistake, they are included in a class, generally deemed beyond the reach of the teacher's art.

Another boy, Warren Mantur, aged fourteen years, had very little command of muscular motion, when he entered. He could not, or would not mount up stairs, two steps, without creeping on his hands and knees. He now walks about firmly; he can go up a long flight of stairs, climb on a ladder, and perform various gymnastic exercises quite freely.

It is probable that, in both these cases the inability to walk depended partly upon the condition of certain mental faculties, as will be mentioned hereafter.

These cases are mentioned in order to show the effect of bodily training, without dwelling upon the important effect of direct instruction, as shown in mental improvement.

EFFECT OF PHYSICAL TRAINING UPON THE POWER OF ATTENTION.

Bodily training, as has been already said, must not only be the first but almost the last step in the course of instruction of some idiots. Important as it is in the education of all youth, it is especially so to all of this class. It not only invigorates the general health, and induces sound sleep, thereby indirectly promoting mental vigor, but it has, moreover, an immediate and direct influence in calling out the *attention*, and giving command of it. This is a very important matter, and requires particular notice.

One of the greatest difficulties in teaching idiots arises from

their listlessness, and their dislike to any mental effort. They are, or seem to be, unable to give continued attention to impressions made by external objects. There is hardly more difference between the hide of a rhinoceros and the skin of a man, than between the sensibility to outward objects, as manifested by a low idiot, and that manifested by a person of delicate organization. The thunder is not so loud to the former, as the buzz of an insect to the latter; the lightning is not so sharp to the eye of the idiot, as the glow of a diamond to another person; nor does a pungent odor affect the one, so much as the faintest perfume does the other. The idiot of the lowest kind gives but little attention to the impressions upon his senses; eyes has he, but he sees not; ears has he, but he hears not. Even hunger calls not his taste into action; he cares not for flavors or savors,—he only wants to fill up an aching void,—no matter whether it be with cunningly cooked dishes, or crude garbage.

To mental impressions he is, of course, less attentive than to sensuous ones. So unused is he to any mental effort, that he not only dislikes to think, but he really seems uneasy and pained when he is compelled to think. If his attention is forcibly aroused, it flags again in a moment. It must have a new fillip at every instant. His teacher has the greatest difficulty to keep his eye fixed upon his own. It *sidles* off continually, and drops downward. He must be spoken to loudly and earnestly. Visible objects must be presented continually, to illustrate the subject of the lesson. They must be of bright colors, and striking forms; they must be presented in various positions, and his attention must be drawn to them by earnest speech, and fervid gesticulation. When, by these means, his listlessness has been overcome, and he begins to give attention more readily, and to keep it up longer, he has really gained a great deal. The amount of actual knowledge acquired, is comparatively unimportant. Many of the exercises of our school, though repeated again and again, may seem to give nothing more than a little increase of manual dexterity; a little more ready command of some of the muscles of the body. The principle, however, is this, and it is an important one:—that *every movement of the muscles requires the exercise of the will, and of the attention*, and by this exercise some of the mental powers are really strengthened, and their activity promoted. It matters

not much by what particular kind of exercises this effect upon the will and upon attention, is gained.

This principle has been steadily kept in view during the first year's training of our boys, and its good effects are already demonstrated. The constant call upon volition and attention in gymnastic exercises, has not only given more tone and vigor to the system,—more strength and dexterity of body, but more ready command of *attention*, and therefore, more real mental power.

The boy who, when he came here, could not, or dared not, go up a flight of stairs, can now climb up the under side of an inclined ladder, and perform various feats, requiring some strength, dexterity and courage; now if any one should estimate the value of this power to him solely by the direct benefit which it might be to him, such as increasing his bodily dexterity, or improving his health, he would overlook some of its greatest advantages.

DIFFICULTY OF FINDING GOOD TEACHERS FOR IDIOTS.

The necessity of constantly acting upon the principle stated and explained above, must always increase the difficulties in the way of the education of idiots, because there are comparatively few persons who have the gift of commanding their attention, by perfectly unobjectionable means;—by earnestness without temper; warmth without anger. Perhaps one cause of the extraordinary success which certain teachers in common schools, have from the beginning of their career, is their faculty of arousing and holding fast the attention of their scholars. They may not be men of talent, in the ordinary sense of the word; they may not have learning, or system, or even experience; but they are *live* men,—earnest men;—they throw themselves with enthusiasm into the subject; they fascinate their scholars; they heat their minds, until they become malleable, and then stamp in the impression deeply. It is hard to express this peculiarity of certain men, otherwise than by calling it a magnetic, or magnetizing power; they *magnetize* their scholars; they force their minds to come into relation with their own, whether they will or not. By their mere *manner* of giving a lesson, or explaining a subject, they create and keep up in the minds of the scholars, a degree of attention and interest, which ordinary teachers cannot do by scolding and whip-

ping,—by black marks and by white,—by rewards and prizes, or by any of the usual aids and appliances necessary to those who have not this gift.

Such persons were *born to be teachers*. Nature meant that instruction should be given; and, as in every thing else, where she gives something to be done, she gives also the requisite number of agents, with a particular faculty of doing it well; so also for teaching, she supplies to every generation, persons specially fitted to be teachers. Such persons are ever teaching and leading others, and if they will not make it their especial calling to do so, or, if people will choose into their places, persons fitted for mere handi-craft men, or for mere literary drudges, then so much the worse for the scholars,—for the persons who are in places that do not fit them, and for all concerned. A misfitting boot or garment, is a trifle compared with a misfitting place for a man. If it be too big for his dimensions, he cuts a sorry figure; it cannot honor him, but he dishonors it; if it be too small and rigid, like a Chinese shoe, woe be to him, for he cannot grow, or he grows distortedly; but if it be pliant, like a school, then woe be to the scholars' minds,—he will stretch them out of all comeliness of shape.

It is said to have caused surprise in England, after the establishment of infant schools, by Wilberforce and other *born teachers*, that women, who are so admirably fitted to teach children, could not teach infant schools, as well as the energetic men first engaged in them. May not the case of the idiots explain this? Infants are lively enough; their senses are all wide awake; but if you put them into a class, and require them to give their united attention to any thing, then comes the tug of war. Heads, arms, legs, bodies, and tongues, are all in motion. An ordinary person cannot make them sit still, or *look still*, or give two minute's continuous attention to any thing he says; but as soon as there comes before them, a man of strong and earnest nature,—a *born teacher*, he hushes them into silence at once, by a gesture; he fascinates every eye by his earnest gaze; he presents his subject vividly, and simply;—he throws his soul into it; and the little ones hang on his looks, and listen to his words, and partake of the enthusiasm which he feels and shows, and communicates to them. If an ordinary man, not a *born teacher*, attempt to imitate this, he fails. There is not about his natural manner,—his natural language, (so to speak)

enough of earnestness and power, to arrest and control the minds of his class, he cannot *magnetize* them, he cannot hold their attention, and so he has to resort to other modes. For earnestness, he is very apt to substitute anger; and he calls in artificial appliances, promises and rewards, or more commonly, threats and punishment, to supply his own short comings.

I have said, that in teaching idiots, the instructor must speak loudly and earnestly, in order to strike the senses forcibly, and to arouse and sustain the attention, but he must never speak sternly and ill naturedly; he must have the fervid speech, and the earnest gesticulation, but let him beware of the slightest feeling of impatience or anger; it will surely do harm, and pervert his lesson into a lesson of evil.

A teacher of idiots should possess a rare combination of intellectual and moral qualities. He should have enthusiasm of spirit, love for his scholars, zeal for his work, and faith in its final accomplishment; for which he must labor during many years with untiring patience,—with earnestness of manner,—with gentleness of temper,—and with exhaustless fertility of invention.

It is comparatively easy to direct what is to be done, but when it comes to the execution, every thing depends upon the teacher; his office is as important as that of the director. It may seem paradoxical, but it is probably true, that it requires a rarer and higher kind of talent to teach an idiot, than a youth of superior talent. When the time comes, that schools for idiots are established over the country, it will be found more difficult to get good teachers for them than to get good professors for our colleges.

INFLUENCE OF THE SIZE OF THE BRAIN UPON IDIOCY.

Owing to causes mentioned in other parts of this report, the variety, not only in mental capacity, but in mental idiosyncrasy is very great among our pupils; not merely as great as among ordinary boys, but far greater. They are, or were, at the time of their admission, all of them idiotic; they would have been pronounced so by any person conversant with such cases. Indications of idiocy in all the cases, except those two in which it was complicated with insanity, were so plain as not to be mistaken. Out of the

whole number, however, there were only two who would have been recognized as idiots, by mere examination of their heads. Taking the whole thirteen together, the average size of their heads is larger than the ordinary size of the heads of persons of their age; but it is to be observed, that one was hydrocephalic; leaving him out, the average of the others would be about the ordinary size.

The two with small heads, would be selected by any one, at sight, as not having brains enough for the manifestation of common sense, first, because their heads are so much smaller than common heads. If their lungs were as much dwarfed in comparison with the other organs of the body, as their brains are, the functions of respiration could not be carried on with any degree of perfection; the blood could not be *oxygenated* fast enough for the purposes of health.

These cases naturally suggest some physiological remarks upon the effects of size of the brain upon idiocy.

Idiocy is sometimes caused by the smallness of the brain; indeed, the true *type* of the lowest class of idiots, is a person whose brain is too small to perform its functions, normally. The common notion, however, that this is generally the cause of idiocy, is incorrect. Out of 338 cases, the measurement of which is given by the Massachusetts commissioners, only 99 had diminutive brains. Among our boys, only two have very diminutive brains.

The size of the brain which is necessary for a normal manifestation of intellect, varies according to the quality and condition of the bodily organization, as will be shown presently.

When the idiocy arises, as it probably does in the majority of cases, from some congenital imperfection in the organization of the brain, or from some inherited tendency to deranged action, then the variety in the appearance and in the condition of the sufferers, is almost as great as is their number. They have heads of the ordinary size, or, perhaps, even larger than usual. They are uncouth in their appearance, and strange in their ways; they are often deformed, or distorted; they appear to have the rudiments of all the parts, or attributes of man, but these are so disproportioned, and so ill adapted to each other, that it seems a hopeless task to make out of them a harmonious whole. Idiots of this class, however, preserve the human appearance. Dis-

figured and even distorted, as they are, they still seem human; they are like men, and not animals, in their looks.

When, however, the idiocy arises from insufficient size of brain, the idiot generally loses the peculiarly human appearance, and sinks to the likeness of the higher animals, in his looks and actions.

My observations have not yet, perhaps, been sufficiently extensive, to give much importance to this suggestion, but it seems to be made more probable, by *a priori* reasoning. Organic defect, or functional derangement, may affect *any* part of the brain, and the idiocy that follows may be from want of harmonious action among the faculties, and this want of harmony will manifest itself in a thousand different ways, for there are thousands and tens of thousands of possible inharmonious actions among so many functions and faculties, and only one perfectly harmonious action.

When the brain is merely too small, then, if it is dwarfed equally in all its parts, we should expect to see a very feeble but a harmonious development of character; the feebleness might be so great as to amount to idiocy,—but we should have a man in miniature. This, however, is not the case; at least, it is not, so far as my observations have gone. Where the brain is too small, it is not dwarfed, equally, in all its parts, but it is especially so in the upper and forward region;—in the parts which are considered, by many physiologists, as the seat of the organs of the peculiarly human faculties and sentiments; while the hinder and lower parts of the brain, or those supposed to be the seat of the organs of the appetites and propensities common to men and animals, are far less affected. Nature first makes sure of those parts necessary to the continuance of the individual, and of the race, as the foundations, without which there can be no superstructure. The lower, or animal region of the brain, predominating in size, not only renders the person more active in his animal nature, but gives to him a peculiarly animal look.

It should ever be remembered, that this disproportion between the different parts of the brain, though small, at first, will constantly increase, not only in the idiot, but in every one, if left unchecked by proper means. That which is, by nature, a little the strongest, becomes, by *exercise of its functions*, and by

neglect of exercise of the functions of other parts, *very much* the *strongest*, until it utterly prostrates and masters them. Hence, the high duty and responsibility of the more gifted to the less gifted;—hence the claim of the idiot and of the youth of low organization, upon the men of high organization; a claim stronger even than that of ordinary youth; for these are they who have terrible wars in their members, and who are not, and cannot be a law unto themselves.

May not the organic peculiarities, the instincts, habits, and appearances of idiots,—true idiots,—give us some clue to the process of development of the race of mankind?

In all the early steps of the great progress hitherto made by the human race, the lower, or animal parts of our nature have been more active than the higher ones, except in the rare cases of richly gifted men, who have risen up from time to time, and stood like prophets, showing the capacity, and foretelling the elevation of man. During all this time, the improvement of the bodily organization, has preceded and influenced the improvement in character. The farther we go back towards the barbarous condition, the lower we find the organic condition of the people to be. Those tribes which still linger behind in savagedom, show us the race not yet emerged from its youth, by reason of the great comparative activity of the animal propensities.

Now it seems as if the dwarfed brain of the idiot, shows us a still earlier and lower condition; it exhibits the animal man still more clearly, and shows him to resemble the monkey most closely in his looks. It is not merely the *up-looking* and twinkling eye, the flattened forehead, the projecting jaws, and the other anatomical peculiarities that give him this likeness, but sometimes, moreover, the likeness is seen in habits and actions. One of our pupils, besides all the marks just mentioned, which give him a strong likeness to the monkey, has, moreover, the long arms of the ape; he moves about with his head and shoulders stooping, and his arms hanging forward, as though he were going to drop upon all fours. One of his pleasures is, to climb upon a desk or high place, and leap through the air, with out-stretched limbs, upon some one's neck, and to cling around him, not as a common child does,

with his arms alone, but twining his legs about him as though he were one of the quadrumana.

There are many remarkable instances on record of idiotic persons manifesting a striking likeness, in their habits, to the habits of the higher animals; and if it be found, as I think it will, that this likeness is strongest in those who have very small brains, then we may suspect not only that their idiocy is caused by diminutive size of the brain, but that there has been a progressive development of that organ in the progress of the race. Some of these habits seem to show the reappearance of instincts which could only have belonged to man in a low animal condition, and which have entirely died out in the race long ago,—even before it arrived at savagedom. Such, for instance, is the gnawing off the umbilical cord of the infant, by an idiotic mother, in the manner of animals.

Some of the cases in our school furnish interesting evidence in support, not only of the doctrine, that diminutive size of brain may cause idiocy, but, moreover, that the texture, or *quality* of its organic tissue, may modify very materially, the manifestations of mind made through it. There is a certain point as to bulk, below which, if the brain falls, the person must, necessarily, be idiotic, but that point varies very much in different individuals, as was said just now, and depends upon, or is connected with those conditions of the bodily organization, comprehended under the term *temperament*. The most important of these conditions seem to be, that of the tissue of the fibres of the body, especially that of the brain and nervous system. This may be recognized by external marks, by the hair, features, skin, proportion of the limbs, and appearance of *fineness* or coarseness in the texture of the body generally. It is easily known when once observed. It is the true standard of beauty. The perfection of it is best expressed by the single word—*blood*, or high blood. There is very great difference among men in this respect; the vessel of fine porcelain excels not more in beauty, and especially in fineness of grain, the coarse earthen jug, than does a man of blood, or high temperament, excel one of low and coarse organization;—no matter though the first be a North American Indian, the second a prince whose

“ * * * ancient but ignoble blood

Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood.”

As the arabian steed is to the cart-horse, so is the man of fine temperament to the man of coarse temperament.

This difference in temperament, and the effects of it are seen in two of the idiot boys mentioned above. The cranium of the first, G. Rowell, measures 14.91 inches in its greatest circumference; 10.44 inches from ear to ear, over the top of the head; and 10.13 inches from the root of the nose to the occipital spine.

The head of the second, Edmund, measures 17.06 inches in its greatest circumference; 11.07 from ear to ear, and 11.75 from the root of the nose to the occipital spine. It is fair to conclude then, that in both these cases the idiccy arises from want of sufficient bulk of brain; indeed, the first falls short of the size supposed to be necessary for manifestation of any intellect, by physiologists who have written upon the subject.

The first named boy, whose head is so much smaller than the second, and indeed than any boy in the school, and who has such a striking resemblance to the ape tribe, manifests much more vivacity, activity, and intelligence than the second, and indeed, than several of the others. He is very active, very resolute, and very passionate. He masters all the boys who are any where near his own age; and sometimes strives for the mastery over the bigger ones.

Now, why is it that of these boys whose idiocy is caused by want of bulk of brain, the one with the smallest brain should manifest the most intelligence, and the most character? Precisely for the reason, that the man of "blood," or fine temperament is superior in these respects to the man of coarse organization,—though his brain may be smaller; for the same reason, that the arabian steed is superior to the cart horse, not only in fleetness, but also in sagacity. This boy's body is of a much finer organization, and his brain, doubtless, is so likewise. In his bodily structure generally, the nervous system has a greater comparative development than in the second, who is rather of the lymphatic temperament. His features are more cleanly cut and chiselled, his skin is softer and more delicate, his hair is finer, his eyes are more lively and fiery, his limbs are more delicately shaped, his fingers are longer, and differ more from each other in length. As compared with the other, he is more of what may be called the poetic temperament; he is an idiot,—but an idiot made of *finer clay*, and in a *finer mould*.

As a small machine, say a mill, if made of fine material, and well constructed, may turn out more meal than a larger one of coarse materials, rudely put together, so a small and fine brain may do more *thinking* than a bulky and coarse one. But let not the sceptic lose sight of the rest of the figure,—there can be no mill built without a *BUILDER*,—and it can turn out no meal at all without a *miller*!

It is interesting to examine these boys with a view to the faculty which they manifest for speech. They were both in good health when they entered; they were pretty free and active in their motions, and had, for idiots, very good command of most of the voluntary muscles. The senses, especially those of sight, and hearing, were tolerably active; but they could not speak a word. That part of natural language which we call the language of signs, which expresses certain emotions, and which men have in common with the higher animals, was possessed by these boys, in about as much perfection as it is by trained monkeys and dogs; but the peculiarly human attribute, speech, was utterly wanting. Nevertheless, the difference between the man, even in his lowest, or animal state, and the brute, was clearly visible in these boys; and seemed to be a difference, not in degree *but in kind*. They had no speech; they could not make the simplest sentence, but they had the germs of the *capacity*, and of the *disposition*, to speak; not as the parrot speaks, not to imitate sounds merely, but to attach *names* or vocal sounds to things, and to use these sounds as *the signs of the things*. They have therefore, the natural disposition and capacity to form language;—attributes which are utterly wanting, even in the highest animals, and for lack of which none of them ever can be made to use it.

Both these boys have learned a number of words, and take great pleasure in using them. It is a most touching sight to see the efforts which poor little Edmund makes to repeat over the words that he has learned, and to show to every one whom he meets, that he understands them. There seems to be a human soul struggling to free itself from a brutish form, into which, by some magic, it had been metamorphosed. He goes about holding up a nail, a stick, a ball, or any object of which he has learned the name, and presenting it before the eyes of every one

whom he meets, he strives to pronounce the name clearly, and repeat it over, as if he would challenge attention, and proclaim his title to a share of human nature. He has not, perhaps, learned as many words as a parrot might have learned in the same time, but his words are to him names of things,—signs by which his unfledged spirit may interchange signals with the strong-winged spirits about him; for, idiot as he is, he is a human being, and language is already to him, what it never can be to the most loquacious parrot that ever lived,—it is a medium for the conveyance of his simple thought, and for his understanding the thought of others. But to return to the special consideration of the school, and particularly the

DESIGN AND METHOD PROPOSED IN EDUCATING THE IDIOTIC.

It will be seen, by what has been said, that the main object has thus far been to train the bodily functions and the muscular motions, and to establish habits of attention. All this is with a view to preparing the pupils for future progress, and for actual knowledge.

The attempts to convey DIRECT INSTRUCTION, have been confined principally to giving lessons upon objects which address themselves immediately to the *senses*. In all the exercises for training the senses, some real knowledge of the qualities of the objects must of course be gained, but the conveyance of knowledge in those exercises, has been secondary to the improvement of the senses themselves.

The untutored idiot gives so little attention to the appearance of things, that often he does not even distinguish bright colors, unless his attention is directed to them. Large pieces of bright colored pasteboard or paper, are placed before him, and he is required to distinguish between red and black, and blue and green, and the like. At the same time, the names of the colors are given, and he is required to learn and to repeat them. In this, of course, the disposition to imitation must be relied upon, because the scholar does not understand the words. If his teacher, pointing to the black-board says, "say black-board," he will try to repeat, "*say black-board*," and if he is allowed to do so a number of times when the object is presented, he will learn to think that "*say black-board*," is the name of the black-board. He will learn by practice, and by that only, to give the right

name. Considerable time must be spent upon exercises in naming objects, and the idiot must be made to repeat the name perhaps, many hundred times; for these simple elements of knowledge, which other children learn merely by the sportive exercise of their senses, can be mastered by him only with patient and oft repeated efforts.

It will serve to give an idea of the tediousness of the process, to state that Mr. Richards was obliged to make a boy of thirteen years of age, repeat three consecutive words, six hundred and forty times, before he could be sure he would do it correctly. The same process has to be gone through with, in order to teach them other qualities of objects. Balls made of different materials, of wood, woollen, leather, Indian rubber, &c., are placed upon the table before them, and they are drilled upon their names and qualities. The same is done with regard to objects of different size and shape. Step by step, and slowly, often turning back, and going over the inch of ground he has gained, the idiot creeps forward a little. It may cost him a score of lessons to learn to distinguish between the length of a foot rule and of a yard-stick, but when he does, he has gained some positive and directly useful knowledge.

Different kinds of grain are kept in boxes, and measures of different capacities are at hand. The same may be done with a great variety of substances; fruits, spices, &c., &c. Having learned to know the difference between one and two, between a handful and a pint, a pint and a quart, the idiot is made to pour two successive pint measures into a quart measure, and then his feeble intellect is taxed to comprehend that two pints make a quart. This is no light task for his untrained mind. Hour after hour, and day after day, he must fill a quart measure, pronounce its name, and the name of the grain, empty it into a larger measure, and count the number of times he does it, in order to fill a peck. It is very hard to teach him that one and one make two; harder still, that two and two make four. Without the aid of *objects*, of the things themselves, he would never comprehend the relative quantities composing pints and quarts, quarts and pecks, pecks and bushels. With their aid even, his ideas of their relations may be vague and indefinite, but perhaps, not more so than many a boy who knows Latin and Greek enough to enter a college, but who never had the rela-

tions between measures demonstrated to his senses; and is perplexed to remember whether it is four pecks and eight gallons, or eight pecks and four gallons, that go to make a bushel. To him who has never learned by actual observation and measurement, what is a square foot, a square rod, a square mile, and the like,—the assertion that one State has an area of ten thousand square miles, and another an area of twenty thousand, conveys only an idea, that one is double the size of the other, without any definite notion about the real extent of either.

Numbers are first taught by presenting them in the concrete, and gradually an idea is formed of their abstract relations. Objects are handled, counted, and dwelt upon a long time. An idiot may labor months in the apparently vain attempt to distinguish between four and five; yet is not the labor all in vain, for though he may not be able at the end of a year to distinguish between eight and ten, yet has he gained something by every effort. Even in this respect, however, the difference between the idiot and other children is not so great as may at first appear, for the abstract relations of numbers are not always understood even by those who have long been in the habit of using the signs of them; they talk about six, eight, and ten, without really understanding the difference between them; and they sometimes acquire dexterity in arithmetical operations, without at all understanding even the multiplication table. Most of us, probably, use words very freely as signs of high numbers,—hundreds of thousands and millions,—the true value and relations of which are quite beyond our comprehension.

A Turk stoutly maintained that Constantinople was larger than London, and being asked how many inhabitants it contained, said, “a million;” to which it was answered. “London contains two millions;” whereupon he rejoined,—“then Constantinople must have three millions, for I *know* it is the largest city in the world.” So imperfect is our system of instruction, that the notions of most of us respecting the value of high numbers are as vague as that of this patriotic mussulman.

Pursuing the instruction of the idiot, his eye and his hand are to be trained together, by teaching him to draw simple marks and lines upon the black-board. This is a great step forward, and a more formidable and difficult matter than would at first appear. Simple as it may seem to make a straight line with a piece of

chalk on a black-board, it is not easy for any one, as he will find by trying to draw a right angle, or a square, without a ruler.

When common children are trying to learn linear drawing, as they should always do before trying to write, since writing is only a complex and difficult kind of linear drawing, we see how many marks they make before they are sure to draw a perpendicular line, because there are thousands of ways to make it *wrong*, and only one way to make it right; and they work as if by chance, trying the wrong ways, and even seeming to exhaust them before hitting the right one. Moreover, after they have at last got it right, they are not sure to make it in the same manner the next time; they must go through the trials of failure and success many times, before the habit of making it right becomes fixed. The teacher must not expect that they can see, as he does, the variations from a perpendicular; nor call them blockheads if having at last drawn it right at the very next trial they make it wrong again. We are to have long enduring patience with common children, and never-ending patience with idiots.

It is always worth the teacher's while to consider and to analyze the mental operations which his scholars must perform, and the long practice they must have in the repetition of those operations, before they can perform them spontaneously, or at least without consciousness of any effort; and he may find matter for such consideration, even in the attempt to draw lines.

Whether or not there be any part of the brain whose special function is to serve the mind in the perception of *form*, certain it is that the capacity to perceive and comprehend it is developed after infancy, and that its extent varies very much in different individuals, and probably in the same individual, in different conditions of his organization.

A perpendicular line is one of the elements of form, and it is not going to the root of the matter, to say that a child learns to draw one by the sense of imitation merely. The capacity for imitation does not give the power of conception; long practice even, will not give such accuracy of eye to a person, whose capacity for conception of form is naturally feeble, as another person differently constituted will have, almost without any practice at all. The latter will detect at a glance the least departure from uprightness in a wall, or a pillar, which the former

cannot discover by close examination. The eye of the one must be confirmed by measurement,—that of the other is as true as the line and plummet itself.

This perception, or sense of perpendicularity, is closely connected with the sense of equilibrium, which we know to be developed gradually in the infant, and more or less rapidly in different infants, not according to the degree of practice which they may have, but according to this, modified by the original capacity, which is probably dependent upon some peculiarity in some part of the brain. That it is so, would appear from the disturbance of the function which takes place when the brain is affected by intoxication; the man reels partly because he loses the sense of equilibrium. He says with reason, to those who chide him for staggering,—it is easy enough for you to say, “walk straight,”—but how do you do it?

The child may say, with equal reason, to the master who bids him copy exactly his straight lines,—it is easy enough for you to say “copy,”—but how do you do it?

This sense of equilibrium, which seems not to be developed at all in the babe, begins to show itself in the infant when he tries to stand alone; and, as soon as it is sufficiently trained, and he has acquired the command of the muscles, he will walk; but one child will walk much sooner, and more firmly and accurately than another, nor does the difference disappear entirely in after life.

It is said that the ability of the child, to balance itself, and to walk, depends solely upon the training of the muscles, but it can hardly be so. There is reason to think, that one reason why the idiotic boy mentioned on page 46, could not walk, even when he was six years old, was his lack of this sense of equilibrium, though another, doubtless, was his excessive cautiousness, which made him timid to an extraordinary degree.

These different mental faculties are developed unequally, and act and react upon one another in such a manner as to make it very difficult to assign each one its part, nevertheless, a consideration of them is not useless to the teacher, especially in *training*.

In teaching linear drawing to children, preparatory to writing, much help may be had from ascertaining what are the simplest elements of form, and making them learn those first. This is

not usually done; the preparatory steps are not first taken; linear drawing is not taught, because, so great is the power of imitation, and the aptitude for learning in young children, that they get on, some how or other, and learn to copy the most complicated forms of letters, and at last to write rapidly, without ever having had lessons in the elements of form, or in linear drawing. This only shows, however, that they can learn by inferior methods, and it is well for them that they can; but when we are led to examine the details of the process, and to go back to first principles, as one must do in the instruction of idiots, it is seen how the system of instruction may be simplified and improved.

It has been said about reading, that if children only knew beforehand the great difficulties to be overcome, they might be held back in despair from attempting the task. The same might be said more forcibly of *writing*. The power of attention has to be trained to distinguish forms and outlines; the faculty of imitation has to be exercised, in order to give the power of copying; the command and direction of muscular motion has to be gained by manifold and long continued exercise, not of one, but of many muscles. There are the flexors, the extensors, the rotators, each and every one of which act, sometimes alone producing direct motion,—sometimes in coöperation with others producing a resultant motion in the mean direction of the two forces. To be able to do all this,—to combine the varied motions of the arm, the hand, and the fingers, so as to form letters, even by pains-taking and care, and to do it correctly, is a great thing;—to do it easily, swiftly, and almost without thought, is a wonderful thing!

To say that we do these things mechanically, and as it were, unconsciously, lessens not the wonder, but on the other hand, increases it. To one who had never seen the process, but who understood fully all the difficulties overcome by a dexterous scribe in copying a manuscript,—the process would seem like a miracle. It is, indeed, one of those common and every-day miracles which familiarity is so apt to make us disregard. When we come to try to teach an idiot this art, then we apply, as it were, a magnifying glass to the process, and discover all its details and its difficulties. To him, every new figure is a veritable *pons asinorum*; every curve is a new mystery; he

spends months over the simplest marks; and when other boys have bounded on to the end of the course, and can make eagles, and griffins, and all sorts of figures, with a flourish of the pen, the poor idiot is laboring slowly along, far behind, rounding his *o's*, and dotting his *i's*.

It is the same with other branches of instruction as it is with writing. But let not this discourage any effort: both learners are going forward and upward, and though the distance between them seems so immense, that the one feels the pride of a superior being, yet he should ever be humble, for the distance at which he is in advance of the idiot is as a point—as nothing, compared with the distance forward to Him who is Perfect Knowledge! Because we may seem to fly,—shall we not teach our brother to creep?

It is not deemed necessary to go into a detail of all the modes of instructing the pupils in our school, because these particular modes are unimportant. Enough has been said to illustrate the principle. With this principle in his mind, each teacher will find ways and means to carry it out. To each of the pupils senses the appropriate objects are to be presented in the concrete, and their names, numbers, and qualities, are to be taught. To the eye, are to be presented colors, forms, positions, motions, and measures; to the ear, sounds, in all their varieties of concord and discord, of time and tune; to the feeling, sizes, resistance, smoothness, roughness, elasticity, and weight;—to each sense, its appropriate objects, varied in as many ways as possible, and made as different from each other, and as striking, in appearance, as can be.

After the senses are trained to take note of their appropriate objects, the various perceptive faculties are to be trained by exercises adapted to each of them. The greatest possible number and variety of facts, are to be gathered by the exercise of these faculties,—and to be garnered up in the memory,—as a store, out of which the higher mental faculties may draw materials for constructing general ideas.

The efforts made to teach reading, have been, upon the whole, satisfactory. Some even of the lowest class have learned to select words, printed on slips of paper. The ordinary method of teaching the letters first, was tried but failed; that of teaching each word, as a whole, that is, as a complex sign of a thing, was

more successful. For example, the different powers of the three letters *h*, *a*, *t*, could not be understood; but the complex sign made by uniting the three, and making the word *hat*, could be understood as the sign of the thing worn upon the head. It was the same with Laura Bridgman. The success in these cases shows how well this mode of teaching reading is adapted to the simple understanding of children.

Thus far the teachers attention has been confined mainly in instruction to the exercise of the senses, and to the knowledge of the simple attributes of things; and Mr. Richards has shown his skill in adapting his lessons to the condition and capacity of the pupils. When his record of facts shall be ample enough, and their result more apparent, their publication will be far more valuable than such generalizations and speculations as this report contains; for these are made rather with a view to express the writer's interest in the subject, and to inspire similar interest in others, than with a hope of giving much information,

Besides imparting mere knowledge, there is a still higher duty to these unhappy beings, which is to bring out, and to train, as far as may be done, the feeble germs of their social affections, and their moral sense, their love to men, and their responsibility to God. As this is the highest, it is also the hardest task of all; for, as the peculiarly human attributes upon which all virtue is founded, are last in the order of development in the progress of the race, so they are feeblest in those whose low organization throws them back nearer to the original animal condition. We must profit, however, by the great lesson of patience set us by nature in her slow development of the race, where the long day of a thousand years is followed by the morrow of a thousand, in which a small but certain progress is clearly shown. How long men remained in the animal condition we know not; we first find them in the state of unthinking pagans; slowly they become reasoning heathens; and at last, believing Christians, in which state they linger long before they manifest their sense of being truly children of God, by loving all their brethren, and thus obeying the will of their Heavenly Father.

If then those who, in advance of the rest of the race, have arrived at what they call Christianity, are still selfish, and ready to fight for their own selfish ends, how shall we expect

the poor idiot, who has not even arrived at the point of development at which other men become pagans,—who has never felt enough of the blind spirit of veneration to make him bow down and worship an idol—how shall we expect him to manifest the true sense of duty to God, by love to men? The task is hard indeed, but not hopeless; and what we sometimes see in little children, should greatly encourage us. The idiot is still a little child; a child that may never come to maturity, but yet there are in him the elements of many virtues, which manifest themselves even more rarely than they do in the ordinary infant, but still often enough to make us certain of their existence. The infant is at first, like the idiot, only an animal; he has not so much sentiment as would lead a grown man to worship even as a pagan worships; he knows no higher call than that of hunger; his sister might be starving, and cry to him with dying words and looks, for a bit of the bread which he holds in both hands, while his mouth is full, but he would not give her a crumb to save her life;—yet that very infant, as soon as the animal appetite is fully satisfied, may show beautiful manifestations of the tender germs of love.

Who has not seen a little infant mourning over a broken toy, or striving to raise an overthrown chair, and plainly showing by looks and actions, that he personifies it, and supposes it to be suffering? It is not merely that his sense of order is disturbed. There is sometimes evident personification of the object, and manifest grief for its supposed suffering.

Only yesterday this occurred; a father had a cane the handle of which was carved in the shape of a dog's head; his infant son, who could not speak five words, was very fond of this "Bow-wow," as he called it. The father, hoping to please the boy, took a knife and began to cut off the stick, so as to make it short enough for him to walk with. The child was immediately alarmed and troubled, at seeing his "bow-wow" cut, and he showed, by his looks, that he thought it was hurt. As soon as it was cut in two, he began to moan and cry most piteously, "Bow-wow boke,"—"Bow-wow boke." He insisted upon having the end that was cut off, and tried eagerly, to put the two together again. He mourned for some time, and would not be comforted. There could be no mistake about the

nature of his feeling; it was the feeble manifestation of what, by culture, may become the most expansive benevolence.

Little children do indeed continually manifest the germs of noble sentiments, and generous affections, as well as of the intellectual powers;—but how differently are they treated! For the germs of the intellect there is early culture, and skilful training. The best talent of the civilized world has been brought to bear, for generations, upon the subject of its development. From the infant school, up to the university, almost all the incentives, all the prizes, all the honors, are for mere intellectual excellence. Talent! talent! that is the one thing needful! States found and support, and rich men endow establishments for all sorts of intellectual culture; which is all as it should be; but, where are the systematic means for the culture of practical love and goodness?

Let the wisdom and the power of man be devoted to finding out and putting into operation ways and means for making children virtuous and good, as they have been for making them merely wise, and the result will be equally great.

Without faith in the innate capacity for goodness, one could do nothing towards cultivating the social affections, and the moral sense in ordinary children, much less in idiots; with it, he may do much even among the latter.

Much as the idiot needs physical training and intellectual instruction, he needs moral training and elevation equally. It has been said before, but it cannot be repeated too often, that his appetites and propensities being never restrained by any intellect, or any moral sense, seem to monopolize for themselves, all those energies of the system, which, in other persons, are expended in part through the action of moral and social affections; hence those appetites and propensities increase by what they feed upon; they grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength. He has no idea of the capacity of his stomach, and therefore he gorges it; he has no idea of property, and therefore he steals; he has no idea of delicacy, and therefore he continually offends that of others; he has no idea of affection, and therefore he does not love; he has no idea of moral and social relations, and therefore he fulfils none of them. All this is true of the uninstructed idiot; but, even though he has none of these ideas *developed*,—he has, nevertheless, the latent

capacity for their development, and it is upon this capacity that our expectations of his moral culture and elevation must be founded.

The idiot has within him the germs of the moral virtues and social affections, but they are like seeds lying in a wintry soil; they will never sprout, if left to themselves; we must warm them into life, by subjecting them to genial influences; we must quicken their growth, by surrounding them with objects of affection, and by giving to them the daily influence of the sunshine of love. Under these influences there will be growth; tardy and slow indeed,—but still growth. The idiot will learn what love is, though he may not know the word that expresses it; he will feel kindly affections, though he cannot understand the simplest virtuous principle; and he may begin to live acceptably to God, before he has learned the name by which men call Him.

There may thus be training to the exercise of the affections, long before any instruction can be given in their nature; and to virtue, long before its precepts can be understood; indeed, without this training, the precepts are apt to be like seed sown upon stony ground.

As has been said before, the idiot of the lowest class is but an animal, yet, when the cries of the animal nature are hushed, and the talisman of love is presented, then the long dormant affection will manifest itself; as in the cold and senseless iron a sort of answering life appears when the magnet is brought near to it.

In our pupils, even of the lowest class, it is easy to discover the faint manifestation of the affections; as in the case of the one who can neither speak, nor walk, nor creep, nor even chew, but who manifests the pleasure he feels when any one, in woman's apparel, approaches him;—it brings back the memory of a mother's love. He shows as plainly as looks and motions can show, that he loves the matron; his eye glows, with a kindly warmth, and his idiotic look is lost for a moment, in the gleam of affection which lightens his countenance. He understands not speech; but he understands the natural language of kindness, and strives to answer to it.

Amongst our boys, the small-headed idiot, of the lowest class,

sometimes shows marks of affection to his playmates, and kisses them. The doubt of those philosophers who have questioned whether kissing be natural to man, or artificial, would be solved by seeing how readily these uninstructed idiots take to it.

Two other boys, of the lowest class also, who have no speech, sometimes sit close beside each other for a long time, and seem to receive pleasure from bringing the sides of their heads together.

Most of them, when not hungry, or irritated, show sympathy, to a certain extent, in each other's sufferings; and sorrow, when they are grieved, or hurt.

It would be very easy, to multiply instances of the sort, amongst these poor boys, were it necessary, but it is not. They evidently possess the elements of the social virtues, and it is upon their capacity for these virtues that must be founded all attempts to cultivate their affections. The opportunities for these attempts must be found in daily intercourse with them, and in regulating their intercourse with each other. Precept can do little here; it is by example, and by constant practice alone, that the training can be accomplished.

As to the higher moral nature,—the sense of right and wrong, —the supremacy of conscience, and the feeling of accountability to God,—we look almost in vain, for any rudiments of these crowning glories of humanity in the uninstructed idiot. To him the animal nature,—the appetites and propensities, are given in nearly the same degree, as to other men, and it is by being unrestrained and unbalanced that they become rampant; in capacity for the social affections, he is more stinted; still more so, in the intellectual powers; and is left, utterly without any moral, or religious sense. He cannot therefore become, as compared with other men, an accountable moral agent. He is destined to remain through life a little child; as such, he must be regarded and treated; his feeble powers of self-government must be strengthened; he must be surrounded by the kindest and best influences; he must be spared from undue temptations; —but, after all, the responsibility for his conduct must rest with those upon whose sense of justice and mercy, God has made him a helpless dependent.

It has been the aim to conduct this school upon these general

principles, and to follow, as far as we could observe it, the natural order in the development of the various parts of the children's nature; to train, first the body, next the mind, then the morals; never, indeed, losing sight of either, or attending exclusively to any one, but acting with a view to the harmonious development of the whole.

GENERAL RESULT.

The result, thus far, seems to be most gratifying and encouraging. Of the whole number received, there was not one who was in a situation where any great improvement in his condition was probable, or hardly possible; they were growing worse in habits, and more confirmed in their idiocy. The process of deterioration in the pupils has been entirely stopped;—that of improvement has commenced; and, though a year is a very short time in the instruction of such persons, yet its effects are manifest in all of them.

They have all improved in personal appearance and habits, in general health, in vigor, and in activity of body. Some of them can control their own appetites in a considerable degree; they sit at the table with the teachers, and feed themselves decently. Almost all of them have improved in the understanding, and the use of speech. Some of them have made considerable progress in the knowledge of language; they can select words printed on slips of paper; and a few can read simple sentences. They have gained a knowledge of many objects, their names, colors, forms, dimensions, &c. But what is most important, they have *made a start forward*. They have begun to give their attention to things; to observe qualities, and to exercise thought. The mental machinery has been put in operation, and it will go on more easily, and more rapidly, in future, because the greatest difficulty, that of getting into motion from a state of rest, was overcome when it began to move.

There is ground for confidence that the reasonable hopes of the friends of the experiment will be gratified, and that the bounty of the State will not be expended in vain.

All that was promised by those who asked for the trial of this experiment has been accomplished, as far as was possible, in the period of a year. It has been demonstrated that idiots

are *capable of improvement*, and that they can be raised from a state of low degradation to a higher condition. How far they can be elevated, and to what extent they may be educated, can only be shown by the experience of the future. The result of the past year's trial, however, gives confidence that each succeeding year will show even more progress than any preceding one.

The experience gained by all connected with the school, will enable them to do more and better than before. The subject was entirely new to them, and the best and most direct mode of accomplishing many things had to be learned by trials of various ways. Even these unsuccessful trials in the past, may however be useful in the future.

The school will be conducted as an experimental one during two ensuing years, for which provision has been made by the State's bounty; and it is earnestly hoped, with such measure of success as will insure its continuance, in abler hands, and with greater means of usefulness. When the public is convinced, that the plan of ameliorating the bodily and mental condition of idiots is not a visionary one, then wiser and better men will step forward to conduct the enterprise in a wiser and better manner. They will find, perhaps, that the experience gained, during this experiment, may be of some use to them; they may profit even by the errors and short-comings of those who have conducted it; so that in any event, the labors which have attended it, will not have been in vain.

Respectfully submitted by

S. G. HOWE.

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